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THOUGHTS

ON

CIVIL GOVERNMENT:

ADDRESSED

TO

THE DISFRANCHISED

CITIZENS OF SHEFFIELD.

BY HENRY FORKE.

"IT IS JUST THE ENGLISH SHOULD FOR EVER REMAIN AS FREE AS
"THEIR OWN THOUGHTS."

The Will of Alfred.

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ON
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FRIENDS AND FELLOW CITIZENS,

DESPOTISM is an agony : Its expiring struggles are strong, its convulsions violent and painful—they are capable of hurting individuals, but they cannot destroy PRINCIPLES. Hear ye not the *tocsin* of Freedom ringing throughout the world, and calling the dead to life—Hear ye not, from the snowy mountains of the North, to the furthestmost shores of the Mediterranean, the clanking of chains, and their millions of living Beings preparing to take terrible vengeance on their Oppressors.

To the Man who droops at so grand a feast of Reason, Virtue can have no charms. It gives no strength to his hopes, no stability to his resolutions; to him prosperity is a source of insolence, and the wretchedness of others an unvaried theme of self-gratulation.

tulation. But the high-minded Being, who feels no degradation in Poverty, who looks up only to Justice, and looks down only on Vice; whose erect and manly port scorns equally the tyranny of the great, and the servility of the oppressed, glows at the scene—because, he is conscious, that something more than human, is operating this great and wholesome change in the Government of Man.

As a MAN, I rejoice that I have lived to be a witness of these times, which seem, to me, peculiarly marked out by the finger of God, as promotive of the happiness and improvement of my Fellow-Creatures—As a CITIZEN, I glory to see the insolent and rapacious dominion of Kings about to be supplanted by the mild rule of Laws, and that mass of Disfranchised Human Beings, with whom I am associated, about to be protected by *Equal Laws*, the result of the *will of all*.

PEOPLE OF SHEFFIELD, to you I address myself—because I know your virtues, your constancy, your unshaken firmness and integrity. You hate Tyrants, because you love Justice; you adore Liberty, because you cultivate Reason. Hearken then to one of yourselves, who, knowing that he is addressing Men, who are too wise to be flattered, and too well-informed to be *alarmed*—who have numberless wrongs to avenge, and numberless rights to regain, wishes, with you, for nothing so much as a *speedy and definitive settlement*. Truth, like beauty, does not stand in need of borrowed plumage to set it off;—it wants no ornament, but is best described in its wildest and most naked features. Our principles, good and virtuous Men have long since acknowledged—their *application* is all we want: *It is a consummation most devoutly to be wished for*. The harvest, indeed, is plentiful, but the labourers are but few. If I am ever to hope for the approval of my fellow-creatures, it can only be by continuing to act with that diminutive band,

band, whose exertions, and whose sufferings, are great beyond even the powers of imagination.

COMRADES! we are at length arrived to that period of emphatic distress, when the venal pen of falsehood can no longer deceive, and simplicity itself can be no longer misled—a period, which I have repeatedly told you, would befall the British nation, when lulled into a listless security, and when its mind, deprived of those energies, which are alone calculated to pilot the vessel of the State through surrounding storms, should be unnerved or slain. This is a period, when factions, by the violence of their own fermentation, stun and disable one another; and this is the time when plain sense, and downright honesty, have the only chance to get uppermost, and introduce reformation. Party leaders of all kinds are unmasked, and proved to be conspirators against the People. You are invited to judge of them by their works. The *Ins* and *Outs* are alike your common enemies. The *Ins* wish to keep their places, the *Outs* wish to get *in* them. *Men*, and not *Principles*, are the object of the contest; *Power*, and not *Freedom*, the cause. You are to be the reward and spoil of the conquering party.

To be true to yourselves, you must *enquire* before you *condemn*, and *examine* before you *act*. It is by no means agreeable to the maxims of Eternal Justice, to measure out the *degree* of punishment, before the *nature* of the crime is known. A calm investigation, therefore, into the sources of our *wrongs*, will naturally beget a knowledge of our *rights*. In reciting those abuses, which vex and ruin the Citizen, it will be equally my object to propose their several remedies. But, let me here premise, that these several abuses have been occasioned and continued by the infraction of that incontrovertible maxim—*The will of the Majority is the Supreme Law*, and that they never

can, nor will be corrected, until the Sovereign voice of the People shall annihilate them.

It is asserted, that our principles are chimerical in theory, and dangerous in practice. Let them be so. Are they *just*? If they be, they ought to be instantly enforced. The foundations of all human societies are laid in Justice; no pretended arguments of political expediency ought to be allowed to shake its immutable and eternal principles. Its perversion and abuse have cajoled men into servitude; they have been excluded from a participation in the common interests of their country, although they are sure of feeling its common misfortunes. To be just, is the first of human obligations; it is the basis of that beautiful moral edifice, which decorates society, and exhibits the virtues in their more enlarged and perfect attitudes. We cannot be just to *ourselves*, and, at the same time, unjust to *others*. On this principle alone can we estimate the motives of human actions; any other, which derives its currency from the lukewarm sources of Fear, Hope, and Reward, is undeserving of rational investigation, because inconsistent with the natural sentiments of Mankind.

Justice, then, is, or ought to be, the foundation of all human actions, and of all human institutions. It is universal benevolence; it is stern, invariable, and unrelenting. It cannot even undergo any modifications, for clemency becomes a crime, when employed to counteract its operations. Being engraven on the heart of every Man by the hand of God, and long antecedent to moral institutions, which are the mere result of human conventions, it is obvious that the morality, which differs from it in a *single* instance, is a *convenient* morality, not formed for social, but for partial, and, consequently, iniquitous purposes. It was on the full conviction of the truth of these principles, that the first of Romans, raising to Heaven the dagger, reeking with the chaste blood of Lucretia,

Lucretia, swore to avenge Justice on the lustful and beastly Tyrant. It was on this enlightened mode of reasoning, that the inexorable Consul, unmoved by paternal tenderness, animated by the recent expulsion of Tyranny, and the prospect of consolidating the Liberty of his Country, yet, more ruled by the inflexible maxims of Justice, pronounced, from his tribunal, the dreadful sentence of death on his own Children, who were conspiring the restoration of the dethroned Tyrant.—JUNIUS BRUTUS! thy illustrious name and actions shall not be confined to the annals of Historians, and the records of Poets—as long as the Divine Principles of Justice are harboured in the bosoms of Good and Virtuous Men, thou shalt live immortal and beloved!

CITIZENS! the day of account and retribution is at hand. Then will the People be called upon to exert all the severe energy of Justice; then will they be called upon to practise those lessons which History and Patriotism have been long preparing for them. They cannot, therefore, be too deeply rooted in their minds. Let Despots calculate on the consequences.

If, then, our principles be *just*, their efforts are never to be feared. With more propriety can we turn the tables on our adversaries, and pronounce *their* opposite doctrines to be false in theory, and pernicious in practice. If our principles be *just*, and they are such as the *majority* of the People approve, neither hot-headed Bigots, nor interested Pensioners or Placemen, are authorized in opposing them. For the good of the People is the sole interest in the State, and the voice of the People is paramount to all Laws, and annihilates the existence of all subordinate authorities.

The moral Liberty of Mankind has been long since established on principles of Justice. Our more enlightened descendants will be astonished at that insane and weak attachment to prejudices which has separated

separated us from our Reason, and made us become the wretched victims of Sophistry and Governmental Tyranny. They will attribute our delusions to madness, our patience to crimes. Alas! *they* can have no conceptions of misery, who have not fathomed the dreary habitations of sorrow and misfortune; *they* cannot sympathise with the starving mortal, who have never tasted, like him, of the bitter cup of wretchedness. Could they have been the unhappy witnesses of that desolating system, which has raised up a *few*, whose interest lay in our misery, and whose usurpations are cemented by our blood, their resentment would be fired, not against those who oppress us, but against us who suffer.

Truth, however, long buried in this mighty chaos of insolent usurpations and absurd customs, has burst forth to improve and beautify the world. National ignorance will no more serve to authorise national oppression; present measures must assume something more than the tone of Justice to obtain for them a quiet reception among men.

We have unlearned the rugged maxims of Prejudice, and we demand to be governed by more equitable measures of policy. The reason of man is a touchstone by which he may distinguish substantial gold from superficial glitterings—truth from appearances; but it is spoiled and lost by overweening presumption, and assumed prejudices. When long received opinions, however erroneous, or the principles of sects or leaders, constitute the measures of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, men must be expected to judge otherwise than *right*. It is because the people are ignorant of the obligations of Justice, that laws are sanguinary, and justice perverted made red with vengeance; it is on this account that Rulers are armed with terror, and deal out their merciless lessons of morality with the aid of axes, gibbets, racks, dungeons!

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The inhabitant of the desert, joyfully exerts his natural reason, and, by its light, he traverses the rude waste, and concludes on that which his interests require; and shall it be said that Europeans, boasting of civilization, and possessed of the best and strongest principles of action, are careless of exerting them, in a cause wherein their future happiness or misery so essentially depend? Let me rather indulge the pious hope, that Truth, like the sun-beam, has fallen on every cottage, and cheered the mind of every cottager.

To judge impartially of things, we must examine them according to their evidence; no veneration or prejudice should be suffered to give beauty or deformity to any opinions. We are by no means naturally disposed to cheat ourselves: when this happens, you may be assured, it is owing to an ill habit, the consequence of a vicious education. I know how delicate and tender a subject it is, to attack the prejudices and superstitions of others; I feel, by experience, for those whose opinions are as dear to them as a first-born child, and whose minds are not sufficiently magnanimous to brave all pretensions but such as are founded in Truth. But, if the people will continue, in this enlightened epoch, to take their principles upon trust, and without examination, and to make deductions from them as true and solid, they must excuse us, if we accuse *them* of Ignorance and Folly.

You cannot infer, from the patience and humiliation of our fellow-citizens, that they are naturally prone to servitude. Such an abominable imputation derives its source only from the narrow minds and crooked logic of courtiers. Themselves the slaves of every ignoble passion, and of every titled fool or knave, it is no wonder, they should wish to see their servility extend itself throughout the whole of society, and estimate the worth of every other man by their own. Like those lost and hapless females, who shun the light of day, and by night disgrace the police of

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our country, they hate Virtue, because they have forfeited it. It is the same with Liberty. Its value, like that of Innocence, is known only to its possessor; all taste for it is lost, when it is lost itself. Those only would blot out the name of FREEMAN from the book of life, who desire, in their turn, to enslave others, those only cringe and fawn on Tyrants, who would experience a similar recrimination from the People. It is not, therefore, from the servility of nations already enslaved, that we must form our judgment of the natural dispositions of Mankind, either for or against slavery, but rather from the prodigious efforts of every free People to prevent oppression. I am sensible, that those unfeeling slaves are perpetually declaiming in praise of that tranquillity they enjoy in their chains, and that they call a state of wretched servitude, a state of peace. But when I observe the noble minded Being, sacrificing pleasure, peace, wealth, power, and even life itself, to the preservation of that *only* treasure, which is so much disdained by those who have lost it; when I see free-born animals dash their brains out against the bars of their cage, out of an innate impatience of captivity; when I behold Twenty-Five Millions of my Fellow-Creatures, braving the sword, fire, and even death itself, to preserve their beloved INDEPENDENCE—I feel, that it is not the office of Slaves to argue about Liberty. Let then our Men of Spoil and Rapine, cease to anathematize us as *Slaves*, because they are *Tyrants*.

Poverty and Ignorance are not the *causes*, but the *effects* of Slavery. We have been always regarded as a many-headed Beast, whom it is the interest of Rulers to shackle and goad. But, when the People have attained to the exalted knowledge of their *Right* and *Duty*, to throw down antient decayed institutions, and to erect new ones in their place, a different system will be followed. Conscious, that Public Information

formation is the interest of the People, and Public Ignorance the interest of Courts, they will make the most liberal provisions for the instruction of every denomination of Citizens, they will require the expansion of that knowledge, which has been for ages concentrated within the circles of rank and fashion.

Man is no sooner born, than he opens his eyes to Institutions and Laws, which he is bound to obey under the severest penalties. This, doubtless, appears to be, at first sight, but an inauspicious commencement of human life. But there is an antidote at hand.

An obligation, arising from the principles of Justice, is imposed on the *whole* society, to prepare such a mode of education for the new Citizen, as may enable him thoroughly to understand the nature and conditions of those laws which he is compelled to respect. It is thus, a Government, modelled on the holy Principles of Reason and Humanity, acquires assent to its regulations by mild and honourable methods; it is thus, the odious and disgraceful maxim, *Ignorantia legis non excuset*,* will be expunged from our records of law, and crimes will justly call down upon them the collective force of the whole community, because previously defined and known. To inflict punishment on the ignorant, is cruel, unnatural, and unjust; it is establishing, on pretended motives of justice, the uncouth and barbarous measures of a Vandal age. It is the defect of Public Instruction that has occasioned a general depravation of morals, purloined from Virtue her Innocence, and covered the foul horrors of Prostitution beneath the flimsy filken veil of Pleasure; it is the want of an extensive National Education, that has legitimated a body of Men, busy and bold, whose sole existence is derived from the feuds and contentions of their Fellow-

* Ignorance of Law is no excuse.

low-men—contentions, of which they are the two frequent cause; and whose inordinate wealth is raised upon the ruins of that Property, which the rapacious gripe of Injustice has wrung from the sweat and tears of the Industrious and Fatherless.

If the miserable descendants of Poor Parents live in a Community of Men, without enjoying the Rights of Men; in a Society of Citizens, without feeling, in the least, the Benefits of Society—What are *Constitutions* and *Governments* to them?—*Scourges*. The Man, who passes the greater part of his life in unceasing toil, derives no benefits from *their* institutions—no enjoyments from *their* continuance. He has no more Rights, than the Turkish Slave—no other Comforts, than the Poor of Germany. His Property, which the laws of such a country are falsely said to protect, is exposed to the mercy of the first political adventurer. It is torn from him, to be squandered among those idle, monstrous, and useless harpies, who hover about Palaces, and waste that Property which they have never contributed to gather; to reward the well-earned services of nobility *in its cradle*, to support ennobled vice, to encourage influence, patronage, and servility; and, finally, to corrupt the People with the produce of their own labours. It is true, he is told, that all this is for *Government*. On *his* Ignorance, the Oppressor riots—On *his* Misfortunes, Despotism erects her trophies. But, it is our duty to *unmask* these vile pretensions to the eyes of all Men, and to expose, to a Credulous and Plundered Nation, the horrors that lurk beneath them.

In the haughty and impious language of Aristocracy, the Government and the People are two distinct terms. The People, it is said, are made for the Government, not the Government for the People.—Consequently, those supplies which the one *gives* without murmuring, and which the other *takes* without

out blushing, are appropriated, not to defray the ordinary expences attending the administration of the Public Will, and the execution of the Laws, but to add lustre to the parade of an ill-acquired consequence, to enable Lords and Ladies, Maids of Honour, and Mistresses of Honour, to revel in luxuries, while no allowance is made for the calamitous situation of the People, and that of their distressed Wives and Children; no considerations are given *how* the money came, or *how* it goes—it is all for the necessities of the State, “*the dignity of our Crown, the honour of our Flag.*” The dignity of our Crown! the honour of our Flag!—Miserable Nations! it is for that all-consuming Monster, whose *wants* are provoked in proportion to your *wrongs*. What are such pompous sounds, as “*the dignity of our Crown, and the honour of our Flag,*” to a beggared People?—Alas! they are not insignificant sounds! they are the funereal preludes of Blood and Sorrow—of Misery and of Execration! they are the pestilential forerunners of a ruined Commerce, an exhausted Revenue, and additional Taxes!!

A Government, whose progress is thus marked by havoc and desolation, is a downright Tyranny. Placemen and Pensioners may call it a Free Government, but Men who *see* and *feel* its baneful effects, know it to be a GOVERNMENT OF CONSPIRACY.

If such be the inheritance of Nations, if the Property of the People is for such necessities to be eternally *excised* by Rulers, and their Harvests *decimated* by Priests, it is, indeed, an inheritance of Wretchedness, that every motive of human prudence should induce them to renounce immediately. Property is never secure on such unstable and sandy foundations, and Protection itself becomes a farce—for

“ You do take my life, when you do take the means by which
“ I live.”

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When a proper system of National Education shall have taught Youth their real dignity, such inhuman and nefarious measures will never be practised. It will, besides, banish that selfish family spirit which has so cruelly limited Benevolence to the narrow circles of those with whom we are immediately connected, and excited in the breasts of Men a jealousy and suspicion of each other. It will restore Society to a state of Brotherhood, and our Country will be respected as our Common Parent, which we are bound, by every moral obligation, to honour and defend.*

If it be objected, that these Principles require a demonstration, I would refer you to the present Plan of Education adopted in our Country. Ornament is here preferred to Utility—our Wit is improved at the expence of our Understanding. One part of our Youth are taught to consider those, on whom Fortune has been frugal of her favours, as their inferiors, who, being initiated by the homilies of the Church into the principles of slavish submission, are accustomed to “*bow themselves lowly and reverently to their superiors.*” Such a system is not intended to instruct Men in their relative duties, but to nurse them in Deceit, Tyranny, Vice, and Ignorance. Our Universities, those sinks of Iniquity, where Virtue blushes when put in competition with Vice, are intended, and at a most enormous expence, to teach Youth *any thing* but Virtue and Patriotism. The mythology of the Antients, and the intrigues of Gods and Goddesses, are better understood there than the Religion of Nature—the study of our Native Tongue is postponed

* These observations apply equally to the Female Sex. If we sincerely wish them to be partakers of our more refined comforts, they must be fitted for them by a preparatory Education. The Customs and Laws of Europe have made their relative condition truly insignificant; it is high time, therefore, we should render justice to their understandings, and restore them to their rank in society.

ed to compliment the manes of Euripedes, Homer, and Tacitus—Sophistry is the Language of the Schools, and an unchangeable plan of forming the Scholar, is applied to all the purposes of life. The Clergy, who preside over these seminaries of Vice, being formed by theology for retirement and controversy, instil, gradually, into the minds of their Pupils, that cavilling spirit, and *passive* temper, which are the distinguishing characteristics of their order.—They would make us good Cantab and Oxonian Christians—they rarely fail of making us bad Citizens.

The fairest part of human life, thus wasted in an application to a Rhetoric, that neither improves the speech, nor *corrects the dialect*; a Logic, which teaches the neatest manner of concealing Truth; and an History, containing nothing but Chronological disputes—is is obvious, that we are instituted, not in those things we are to *practice*, but in what we are to *forget*, when we become active Citizens. Surely, the Education of Youth ought not to be entrusted to Collectors of Shells and Butterflies, much less to Parsons, who are the constant patrons of passive obedience. It should be entrusted to abler hands; to Men who know the influence of Reason, and the force of habits on the human mind—who have attention to direct its progress and expansion—who can discern the power and impressions of those things which seem indifferent—who are possessed of understanding and taste, to distinguish useful knowledge from false—and who are eminently notorious in the Commonwealth for their exemplary Talents and Virtues.

I am fully aware of the severe animadversions, which certain moderns have thrown on the above plan; they consider all National Education as usurpation on the human mind, and calculated to fetter and prejudice it in favour of such a species of knowledge, as the Rulers of a country think proper to propose;—and, that if they were disposed to pursue the conduct

of Pericles, an age of Effeminary and Vice would succeed that of Reason and Justice. But these objections, with the arguments deduced from them, appear to me both superficial and inconclusive. For, *First*, We are speaking of Men, who are to live members of a settled Community, and not of human Beings who are to run about naked in woods: *Secondly*, Of Beings, who are compelled to obey the general will of the Society in which they are to live; it is, therefore, necessary, that they should understand previously the nature and conditions of their admittance into the civil order: *Thirdly*, The Rulers of a Country, where such an institution is proposed, are the *People themselves*, or their agents acting for them, and under their immediate controul: And, *Lastly*, By a National Education, is meant nothing more than the early institution of Youth in the positive maxims of Justice and Morality—maxims, on which there can be no disputation, and, in the practice of which, but small errors.—Any subsequent instruction will be considered as elementary, and to be disposed of at the future discretion of the Scholar, or agreeably to his intended destination in life. The consequence of all academical Institutions, that are separate from the Community, is the consolidation of Prejudices and Superstitions into a regular system, and the acquisition of the knowledge of physical trifles, while a fatal mediocrity in useful learning has been established, and a few Men, of moderate information, have been raised into notice, at the certain depression of the more enlightened. But the most irreparable mischiefs, attendant on such establishments, arise from the vast influence which the Clergy acquire over the Reason and Habits of Men, from their having a direct tendency to render the simple science of Government a complicated art, involved in a subaltern detail, and hid under mechanical formalities. Youth are deemed capable of acquiring a knowledge of the
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more abstruse sciences of Metaphysics, Natural Philosophy, or Mathematics, and, yet they are denied the capacity of understanding the nature of Government—that science, which, above all others, it most interests every human Being to comprehend!

Let National Schools, then, be immediately founded throughout our country—to these august places let our Youth flock from every village, and receive the early lessons of Patriotism and Virtue. These being superior and preferable to Learning, will assume the first place in the new system. The happiness of individuals, depending essentially on that of the society, the science of Government will be the second class of studies. Here they should be encouraged both by precept and example, to look down on nothing but Vice and Tyranny, and to look up only to the Laws. After these every other branch of science should be arranged according to its degree of utility.

There is a strange propensity among some persons, to call every thing *speculation* which astonishes their little minds. But the slightest attention to History, and the progress of human Reason, will shew us the great alterations which the course of a few years have effected in political ideas. Much remains yet to be done, to be discovered, and to be changed. Political luminaries have made us ashamed of the blind beaten track of affairs, although consecrated by the example of antiquity. Wise Men have profited by their representations—Fools and Despots despite them.

The People are accused of being prejudiced against innovations, because they are such. But, in times so polized as these, no useful plans or palpable truths will be rejected by them. Such a causeless dread of necessary Reforms would for ever consign the human race to a wilderness of misery. The rude hamlets of our Fathers have been gradually fashioned into more convenient mansions; and the naked Savage, wandering over desert and inhospitable wilds, has been gra-

dually inducted to order. If our most important interests are to be committed to chance, if our happiness is to be determined solely by fleeting prejudices, we can have no security for Liberty. Antient customs deserve regard in proportion to their fruit, and they should be laid aside as soon as they are found to be repugnant to Reason, Liberty, and Justice. If, therefore, the collective wisdom of ages be found inadequate to the purposes for which we united, where is the harm in making a grand and new experiment to ameliorate the condition of Man? to repel the storms of Tyranny, and to bind down the wandering genius of Carnage? *

It was the prudential maxim of the antient Romans, after having successively combated against nations, to renounce their own customs, when they found any that were preferable even among the conquered countries. Carthage fell, because she was superstitiously attached to her old forms, and disdained to listen to the voice of her beloved Hannibal.—Athens experienced a similar fate. Her corruptions were so seductive, that she scorned to correct them. No more she astonished the world by her civic Virtues; no more the genius of Eloquence thundered from her tribunes—but the low degrading tone of cringing baseness, flattered kings, whom formerly she made tremble, and enervated the courage of her Citizens, who before were heroes.

Antiquity ought never to be permitted to enshrine injustice. If this principle be denied, the ordinations of the Pundits, and the antient Polish Courts of Judicature,

* As good morals and knowledge are almost inseparable, in every age, though not in every individual, the care of Alfred, for the encouragement of Learning among his subjects, was another useful branch of his legislation, and tended to reclaim the English from their former dissolute and ferocious manners. The most celebrated scholars were invited over from all parts of Europe, and schools were established every where for the instruction of the People. All persons who were possessed of 100 acres of land, were enjoined, by law, to send their Children to school for their instruction.

dicature,* are equally entitled to our veneration and esteem. We have already discarded the ordeal, the trial by battle, the burning ploughshare, the scalding cauldron, the torture, and the faggot.—Why do we not also renounce those odious practices which hold the People in a miserable state of bondage? We are accused of having aspired at a chimerical perfection. Strange reproach! which ill disguises the secret desire of perpetuating abuses. We have not suffered the progress of Reason to be impeded by pusillanimous, or servilely interested motives. We have had the courage, or rather the good sense, to believe, that useful ideas, and truths most necessary to the happiness of Mankind, were not exclusively destined to adorn the pages of books; and that the Supreme Being, when he gave to Man *perfectibility*, an endowment peculiar to his nature, did not intend to bar his application of it to the regulation of society, in which his first wants, his universal interests, are comprehended.†

In short, if you are desirous of seeing your fellow-creatures contented and happy—inform them; if you would rather have them vicious and depraved—keep them in ignorance; if your happiness consist in the delightful prospect of Virtue, Goodness, and Peace—proscribe that enchanting system which has, for ages, weakened the masculine vigour of our Reason, and veiled Truth beneath the meretricious garb of a false eloquence. Virtue, which is nothing but a more enlarged and more cultivated Reason, never flourishes to any degree, nor is founded on steady principles of honour, except where a *good Education becomes general*, and where Men are taught the pernicious

* In the old Polish Courts of Law, the parties were ordered to read a paper, delivered to them by the Judges, and if either of them stammered or mispronounced a syllable, he was presumed *Gulty*!—*Mod. Un. Hist.* vol. 32.

† The second Address of the National Assembly, Feb. 11, 1790.

nicious consequences of Vice, Treachery, and Immorality. Even Superstition is but a poor supply for the defects in Knowledge and Education.

I have taken up so much of your time, on this subject, because I think it a matter of great importance. Indeed, too much cannot be said upon it.—It is one of the greatest causes of the inefficacy of the public will, in constituting the supreme law.—Teach the People their Rights, and the will of the majority will soon be apparent. But what is of more consequence, that *will* must be valued and respected. Of such importance is National Ignorance in promoting the cause of Oppression, that I am fully persuaded, if a system of popular Instruction, whether under legislative sanctions or not, were generally pursued, in any nation where Despotism is prevalent, the gorgeous machinery would soon crumble into ruins; fertile plains would smile, where now horrid fortresses exist; Militias would dispense with Standing Armies; Barracks become Granaries; and Kings, and Priests, and Nobles, be transformed into MEN. For we should never forget, that there will be bad Men as long as there are bad Citizens—and bad Citizens, as long as there are ignorant Men.

When the mind has received this early preparation for the exercise of the civic duties, the career of human life is opened under the greatest possible advantages. Men know what they are to expect from others, and what others will expect from them. *Do unto all others as you would they should do unto you*, is a philosophical maxim, that will form the motive of human actions, and be assumed as the basis of every law. When a Nation is once become moral, legal disputes will but rarely occur; for public Virtue is the love of the laws, and Charity, in its most enlarged sense, the actuating principle of human nature. When we assume the character of social animals, our sphere of moral agency necessarily becomes enlarged,

enlarged, and we have new relative duties to fulfil, which are the offsprings of society unknown to us in our natural condition, and instituted simply to promote general happiness. You should here remark, that all such institutions are unwarranted, even by any pretended necessity, when they are to be accompanied with the dereliction of one original right.—On the contrary, it is our duty, from every principle of self-preservation, to resist them with all our force—the duties and rights of Citizens being posterior and subordinate to those of human nature.

We must cut the accursed knot that has leagued, for ages, legal Sophistry and legal Cruelty together; and Sensibility must no longer indulge and sleep on the lap of Luxury. Harsh and sanguinary laws destroy both public and private Virtues. Vague and useless laws have the same tendency. For Public Virtue bears a proportion to Political Freedom; and Political Freedom ever decreases in proportion to the uncertainty and multiplicity of penal laws. Unless the laws be clearly obvious to common understandings, and fully notified to the People, there can be no Political Freedom. Antiently, the Laws were composed in verse, and chaunted in the public places, that when united to the harmony of music, they might be more easily remembered by all the Citizens. And, at Rome, the Laws of the Twelve Tables were so universally understood, that Children committed them to memory in the first rudiments of their education.* In Athens, they were inscribed in large characters on tables of brass, and hung up in the market-places, for the inspection of every Man.—When Laws are imperfectly known, they are feared, not loved; and, when learnt by fatal experience, the People feel as if the judge were in effect the legislator, and Life and Liberty subjected to arbitrary control;

* Cicer. de. Leg. II. 23.

trol; the idea of insecurity is spread through the whole community, and the sense of safety in which Political Freedom is founded, ceases to exist.

Thus, there can be no difference in the Political Freedom of those countries, where a Caligula, equally descended from Anthony and Augustus, threatened to punish the Consuls if they commemorated the victory at Actium, and to punish them if they did not; where it was equally a crime to mourn for Drusilla, because she had been deified, and not to mourn for her, because she was his sister: And that Nation, whose sanguinary laws, at the end of the eighteenth century, make it a capital offence to cut down a cherry-tree in an orchard; or that whose venal and arbitrary Judges sentence the best of Men and Citizens to *Fourteen Years Transportation, for asserting, that UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE is the Right of the People.**

Laws

* We find, that Alfred, in order to render the execution of Justice strict and regular, divided all England into counties; these counties he subdivided into hundreds, and the hundreds into tithings. Every householder was answerable for the behaviour of his family; and even of his guests, if they lived above three days in his house. Ten neighbouring householders were formed into one corporation; who, under the name of a Tithing, Decennary, or Fribourg, were answerable for each other's conduct, and over whom one person, called a Tithingman, Headbourgh, or Borsholder, was appointed to preside. Every Man was punished as an outlaw, who did not register himself in some Tithing. When any person, in any Tithing or Decennary, was guilty of a crime, the Borsholder was summoned to answer for him; and if he were not willing to be surety for his appearance, and his clearing himself, the criminal was committed to prison, and there detained till his trial. By this institution, every Man was obliged, from his own interest, to keep a watchful eye over his neighbours; and was, in a manner, surety for the behaviour of those who were placed under the division to which he belonged: Whence these Decennaries received the name of *Frankpledges*. Nothing could be more popular and liberal than Alfred's plan for the administration of Justice. The Borsholder summoned together his whole Decennary to assist him in deciding any lesser difference, which occurred among the Members of this small community. In affairs of greater moment, in appeals from the Decennary,

Laws are not made for the pleasure of making them; those, therefore, the effects of which are accompanied by an unnecessary confinement of the Liberty of Men, are repugnant to every principle of human association, and ought to be instantly abolished. Such has been the deplorable effect of the long debasement of Mankind, ignorant of their right to revoke unjust institutions, that they believe nothing is theirs, but what the Law, good or bad, grants to them. They are ignorant, that Liberty and Property are antecedent to every thing; that in uniting,
Men

tennary, or in controversies arising between Members of different Decennaries, the cause was brought before the Hundred, which consisted of Ten Decennaries, or a Hundred Families of Freemen, and which was regularly assembled, once in four weeks, for the deciding of causes. Their method of decision deserves to be noted, as being the origin of Juries; an institution, the best calculated for the preservation of Liberty, and the administration of Justice, that ever was devised by the wit of Man. Twelve Freeholders were chosen; who, having sworn, together with the Hundreder, or presiding Magistrate of that division, to administer impartial Justice, proceeded to the examination of that cause, which was submitted to their jurisdiction.—And, beside these Monthly Meetings of the Hundred, there was an Annual Meeting, appointed for a more general inspection of the police of the district; for the enquiry into crimes, the correction of abuses in Magistrates; and the obliging of every person to shew the Decennary in which he was registered. The People, in imitation of their ancestors, the antient Germans, assembled there *in arms*; whence a Hundred was sometimes called a Wapentake; and its Court served both for the support of Military Discipline, and the administration of Civil Justice. The next superior Court to that of the Hundred, was the County Court, which met twice a-year, after Michaelmas and Easter, and consisted of the Freeholders of the County, who possessed an equal vote in the decision of causes. The proper object of this Court, was the receiving of appeals from the Hundreds and Decennaries, and the deciding of such controversies as arose between Men of different Hundreds. The better to guide the Magistrates in the administration of Justice, Alfred formed a body of Laws; which, though now lost, served long as the basis of English Jurisprudence, and is generally deemed the origin of what is denominated the COMMON LAW. He appointed *regular meetings of the States of England twice a-year, in London*; and, it is a memorable sentiment, preserved, in his Will—THAT IT WAS JUST THE ENGLISH SHOULD FOR EVER REMAIN AS FREE AS THEIR OWN THOUGHTS.—*Hume I, chap. 2.*

Men could have no other object in view than to secure their Rights from the enterprises of the evil disposed; and, at the same time, under favour of this security, to give greater energy and scope to the exercise of their moral and physical powers. They do not consider, that the protecting authority is their own work, established, not to grant, but to guarantee what they enjoy; and, *that in becoming Members of Society, they do not give up a single Right, but obey Law, in order that they may be Free.* As, therefore, every causeless and unnecessary restraint of the WILL, is an infringement of that liberty to which every Member of Society is entitled by the Constitution of Human Nature, it is obvious, that the administration of Justice should be impartial, and the Laws themselves, short, plain, and comprehensive. They should be mild, for they are designed to check the arm of wickedness, not to wage war with the natural sentiments of the heart. The accounts of executive Justice, cannot be read without horror; nor can a Man, of any sensibility, avoid shuddering at those miseries which Men, with unrelenting ingenuity, have devised for each other. The anger and wrath of Aristocracy, are ever brooding over the Poor—tenderness and mercy are reserved for their own order. Throughout Europe, actions, trivial in their nature and effects, are created into crimes, and punishments are immediately invented to expiate them. While the miserable groan beneath their yoke, and offer humble remonstrances and supplications, they are denounced as Traitors and Seditious Men; and the Legislator, like another CEolus, opens his enormous cavern, and loosens all his punishments to scourge and desolate the world. It is by such means, that the Lords and Fathers of Mankind, as they are pleased to call themselves, impose silence on a People, and crush the rebellion of honest Minds.

When

When the circumstances of our Country shall be such, as to enable us to new model our Laws, it will naturally strike every ingenuous mind, that the dismissal of that body of Men, or rather of Demons, called Lawyers, will be the most splendid act of Justice ever performed by any Nation. They have been for a considerable time the subjects of general execration.* The People are wearied with the tolerance of a body of Men, who rob, insult, and abuse them with the most frontless insolence, and who exclusively arrogate to themselves the power of arbitrating between right and wrong. That the strifes of Seven Millions of Human Beings should find employment for Forty Thousand Vultures, is a melancholy instance of the depravity of the present times; it is a dishonour to the Nation, and a disgrace to the Government. But, with so many corruptions and abuses about us, what else can be expected?†

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On

* In the reign of Henry VII. (11th of Henry VII. c. 12.) suits were given to the poor *in forma pauperis*, as it is called; that is, without paying dues for the suits, or any fees to the council.

† “ Those, who make profession of this science, are exceedingly multiplied, being almost equal to the Caterpillars in number; they are of diverse degrees, distinctions, and denominations. The numberousness of those that dedicate themselves to this profession, are such, that the fair and justifiable advantage and income of the profession is not sufficient for the decent and handsome maintenance of multitudes of those who follow it. Hence, it comes to pass, that it is found needful to supply that by Artifice and Cunning, which cannot be procured by just and honest methods. The better to bring which about, very many Men among us are bred up from their youth in the art of proving, by words multiplied for the purpose, that *white is black*, and *black is white*, according as they are paid. The greatness of these Men’s appearance, and the boldness of their pretensions, gain upon the opinion of the Vulgar, whom, in a manner, they make Slaves of, and get into their hands much the largest share of their profession. These practitioners are, by Men of discernment, called *Potifoggers*, (that is, *Confounders*, or rather, *Destroyers* of Right). The *wrong side*, under the management of such practitioners, has the fairer chance for success; and this more especially, if it happens, that the person, appointed to decide all controversies of Property, as well as for the trial of Criminals (who should be taken out of the most knowing and wise of his profession) is, by the recommendation of a great favourite,

On the subject of the alliance between Church
and State, every argument that Virtue, Philosophy,
and

favourite, or Court Mistress, chosen out of this set; and so, having been under a strong bias all his life against equity and fair dealing. I-es, as it were, under a fatal necessity of favouring, shifting, double dealing, and oppressing; and, beside, through age, infirmity, and distempers, grown lazy, inactive, and inattentive, and, thereby, almost incapacitated from doing any thing becoming the nature of his employment, and the duty of his office. In such cases, the decisions and determinations of Men, so bred and so qualified, may, with reason, be expected on the *wrong side* of the cause, since those, who can take harangue and noise (if pursued with warmth, and drawn out into a length) for reasoning, are not much to be wondered at, if they infer the weight of the argument from the heaviness of the pleading. It is a maxim, among these Men, that *whatever has been done before, may legally be done again*; and, therefore, they take special care to record all the decisions formerly made, even those which have, through Ignorance and Corruption, contradicted the rules of Common Justice, and the general Reason of Mankind. These, under the name of *precedents*, they produce as *authorities*, and thereby endeavour to justify the most iniquitous opinions; and they are so lucky in this practice, that it rarely fails of decrees answerable to their intent and expectation. It is likewise to be observed, that this society hath a peculiar cant and jargon of their own, that no other mortal can understand, and wherein all their laws are written; which they take special care to multiply—whereby they have gone near to confound the very essence of Right and Wrong, Truth and Falshood. So that it may take *thirty years* to decide, whether the field left me by my ancestors, for six generations, belongs to me or a stranger three hundred miles off.” *Voyage to the Honybmonds.*

The same Judges who supported the Despot Charles I. afterwards supported the Tyrant Cromwell. *Temporizing* has ever been the principle of the Lawyers. With what abject submission to the will of the Tyrant Charles II. did Jefferies adopt all *his* resentments, and lavish the blood of our Countrymen to him; or the sanguinary and tyrannical temper of James II. who, in his *merry moods*, gave the appellation of *Jefferies Campaign* to the horrid cruelties committed by that monster. Although they colleague with the last James in his *vile purposes*, yet, upon his flight, they waited, in a body, upon the Prince of Orange, to congratulate him upon his succession. After Serjeant Maynard, their speaker, had paid him some compliments, the Dutchman noticed his great age, and observed, that “*he had out-lived all the men of the law of his time*,” to which the subtle Demon replied, “*I should have out-lived the Law itself, if your Highness had not come over.*”—It was this very body of men who, in the reign of James, committed the seven Bishops to the Tower, for opposing the Tyranny of the Court!!!—Tacitus informs us, that the ancient Germans, incensed at the Tribunal of Vatus, cut out the tongues of the Lawyers, and said, “*Vipers, cease to hiss.*”

and true Policy could suggest, has been exhausted.—The result of impartial unprejudiced enquiry, is, that there cannot exist a National Religious Establishment, independent of Intolerance and Persecution. Intolerance is the very principle on which an hierarchy is founded. The lawgiver and the priest imperiously usurp the opinions and judgment of all other men, from whose breasts they expel Reason, that they may occupy its place themselves. The ceremonial of worship, and the mode of belief in an UNKNOWN GOD, are settled in conformity to their caprice or passions; and thus a circumstance, by no means necessary to the well-ordering of society, becomes one of the most powerful means of disorganizing it. As the communication between GOD and Man rests solely in the bosom of the latter, to compel acquiescence in certain doctrines, or to make a particular belief the condition of Citizenship, is nothing else than to encourage Perjury, and to sanction hypocrisy. It is building up a Religion on the systematic ruin of Morality, and to weaken and destroy all the bonds and attachments of human life.

The history of the Church, or of the dominion of Priests, whether of the Jewish, Heathen, Christian, or Mahomeddan, is the record of Farce over Truth, of Superstition over Reason, of Ambition, of Folly, of Cruelty, and of Rage. The worst of hypocrisy is here seen decked in the gaudy attire of feigned Religion;—a tree, from the distasteful root of which nothing has been produced, but the abominable fruit of Murder, Rapine, Incest, and Violence. On one hand, nations are presented to us plunged in unjust Wars and civil Massacre; on the other, lawful proprietors divested of their Property, which has been seized and possessed by rapacious and bloody Men—Tendernefs and Mercy, oppressed by Cruelty and Violence; Justice and Innocence, groaning under the heavy load of Persecution; and the pretended

servants of God sweeping away Virtue from the face of the earth, and overspreading the world with a deluge of destruction. Such is, without exaggeration, the picture of the Church from the beginning of time. The conspiracies of temporal Tyrants never have been, never can be, so great and terrible, as the conspiracies of Priests. The system of the latter is a system of Extermination; but the Ministers of the Christian Church, whether Catholic, Presbyterian, or Regulars, have departed from the ordinary rout of priestly devastations. Their havoc, whether describing its sanguinary course to the Polar snow, the Aliganian chain, or hot, and barren sands of Afric, has been alike ruinous and desolating.*—The dagger, the poisoned cup, the burning faggot, the torture, and all the horrid machinery of death, have marched in the train of the crucifix, and blackened every where the tranquillity of the human race. Paganism, though polluted by all the extravagancies of human Reason, hath left nothing on record equal to the shameful monuments erected by the Christian Church. It knows of no excesses comparable to those produced by the religious phrenzy of Christians, who have, in all ages, and in all countries, planted the bloody banners of the Cross, with the sword, and with the cannon. Thus, since Despotism never had such chains for the minds of Men, as the fears of Superstition; since Tyrants never had such instruments of oppression, as holy Knaves and believing Fools; nor Armies, nor Battles, have laid waste the creation, in any proportion, to religious Butcheries and religious Persecution; nor hath conquest, by the sword, ever enslaved Mankind, in any degree, like monkish devotion and implicit belief—the Church may justly be designated as a Monster stalking over society;

* It was the most unbounded avarice, united to the most furious bigotry, which overturned the antient empire of Montezuma.

ciety; whirling, in one hand, the fire-brand of discord, and, in the other, wielding the sword of slaughter over the heads of Men.*

From the mad schemes of the Crusades to the Reformation, we read of nothing but the waste and ruin caused by Priests. For their bloody errands, unnumbered woes have reached the human race. — The siege of Jerusalem, alone, is a sad evidence of this truth. The Christian army took it by assault, after a siege of five weeks; and, impelled by a mixture of military and religious rage, they put the numerous garrison and inhabitants to the sword, without distinction. “Neither arms defended the valiant, nor submission the timorous. No age or sex was spared: Infants, on the breast, were pierced by the same blow with their mothers, who implored for mercy. Even a multitude, to the number of 10,000 persons, who had surrendered themselves prisoners, and were promised quarter, were butchered, in cool blood, by those ferocious conquerors. The streets of Jerusalem were covered with dead bodies; and the triumphant warriors, after every enemy was subdued and slaughtered, immediately turned themselves, with the sentiments of *humiliation* and *contrition*, towards the Holy Sepulchre. They threw aside their arms, still streaming with blood: They advanced, with reclined bodies, and naked feet and heads, to that sacred monu-

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ment:

* The influence of Priests on the human mind is no where more visible than in the pilgrimage and adoration paid to the tomb of Thomas-a-Becket, at Canterbury. “The devotion towards him had quite effaced, in that place, the adoration of the Deity: Nay, even that of the Virgin. At God’s Altar, for instance, there were offered, in one year, three pounds, two shillings and sixpence; at the Virgin’s, sixty-three pounds, five shillings and sixpence; at St. Thomas’s, eight hundred and thirty-two pounds, twelve shillings and threepence. — But, next year, the disproportion was still greater. There was not a penny offered at God’s Altar; the Virgin’s gained only four pounds, one shilling and eightpence; but St. Thomas had got, for his share, nine hundred and fifty-four pounds, six shillings and threepence.” — *Hume*, vol. iv. p. 181. *Burns*, vol. i. p. 244.

ment: They sung anthems to their Saviour, who had there purchased their salvation by his death and agony. And their devotion, enlivened by the presence of the place where He had suffered, so overcame their fury, that they dissolved in tears, and bore the appearance of every soft and tender sentiment. So easily does the most effeminate superstition ally, both with the most heroic courage, and with the fiercest barbarity!"*

We all of us have in our recollection the evening of the 24th day of August 1572,† when the King of France, in person, led the way to the slaughter of the Protestants. It took place in the midst of a festal scene; the celebration of the nuptials between Margaret, the sister of the King, and the Prince of Navarre. This was used as a blind to the jealous Hugonots. Persons of every condition, age, and sex, suspected of any propensity to the Protestant Religion, were involved in an undistinguished ruin. The streets of Paris flowed with blood: and the people, more enraged than fatiated with their cruelty, as if repining that death had saved the victims from further insult, exercised, on their dead bodies, all the rage of the most licentious brutality. Orders were dispatched to all the provinces for a like general execution; and the people emulated the fury of the capital. All this religious fury was succeeded by the infamous LEAGUE, formed by the Guises, under the auspices of Philip of Spain.

What is the whole of *our* History, but a scene of contention between Priests and Kings; wherein sometimes the one, sometimes the other, have been overthrown, while the miserable People have been ever the victims of both? How they have mutually aided each other in the disturbance of peaceful communities,

* Hume's History, chap. vii.

† Commonly called, St. Bartholomew.

muaities, and in the oppression of the People, let the Dunstons, the Anselms, and the Thomas-a-Beckets testify. The blackest Tyrants they have honoured with a crown of martyrdom, and the most upright Men they have sent quick to Hell, when they have opposed their boundless usurpations. The letter of Pascal II. to Henry I. shews their insolent ambition. "It is monstrous (says the Pontiff) that a son should pretend to beget his father, or a Man to create his God. *Priests* are called *Gods* in Scripture,* as being the Vicars of GOD: And will you, by your abominable pretensions to grant them their investiture, assume the right of creating them?"

The empire of Priests was established, not by the policy of the Church, but the Ignorance and Superstition of the People; who possessed, in the earlier ages of society, no Science or Reason, which could be opposed to their most exorbitant pretensions.—

"Nonsense passed for demonstration: The most criminal means were sanctified by the piety of the end: Treaties were not supposed to be binding, where the interests of God were concerned: The antient laws and customs of states had no authority against a divine right: Impudent forgeries were received as authentic monuments of antiquity: And the champions of holy Church, if successful, were celebrated as heroes; if unfortunate, were worshipped as martyrs. And all events thus turned out equally to the advantage of clerical usurpations."†

The Clergy have planted their power in the fertile soil of Superstition; which has been watered and matured by the Ignorance, Poverty, and Fears of Men. Themselves, the Apostles of passive obedience and of prejudice, they put under their unholy ban those virtuous

* There is no such text in the Scriptures; but Priests are privileged to forge and lie.

† Hume's History, chap. vi.

uous and enlightened Beings, who, moved by a sacred love of Mankind, sympathise with the oppressed, and seek to spare the tears of the unfortunate.

Crimes of the blackest dye, the Priest can forgive ; but Heterodoxy can never be pardoned. Thus, when the *Lord's anointed* hewed Agag in pieces, and Agrippina fell a victim to her parricide son, these spiritual Janizaries marched at the head of processions, to sacrifice to their Deities, and to offer incense for crimes, at which human nature recoiled. Thus, too, Socrates for his dissent, Christ for his love to Mankind, and the innocent family of Calas, for their attachment to a pure form of worship, successively became victims to the pious fury of the self-named Ministers of God. These examples are but as two or three sands on the sea-shore, when compared with the rest. The long catalogue of the crimes of Priests are enrolled in the chronicles of human miseries ;—they are depicted in characters of blood.

The pomp of Churchdom can only be consolidated on the misery of the laity, and its power can only rise with the fall of Liberty and the decay of Knowledge. For, the consequences of Clerical Power are Pride and Debauchery, on their part ; Vassalage, Baseness, and Poverty, on the part of the People.—Whatever, therefore, is gained to the Church, is gained from the People ; so that for it to be rich, we must be Beggars ; that Priests may be Lords, we must be Slaves. This is a brief statement of that grand conspiracy against the human race, which, under the title of Alliance between Church and State, effectually divests Mankind of every thing that sweetens human life, and renders it desirable, or indeed supportable. Is such an alliance then for our benefit, which disarms us of our faculties, crows our minds with slavish fears, and delivers us over to those Men, whose strength lies in our weakness, whose prosperity is owing to our undoing ?

Orthodoxy

Orthodoxy is the peace of the Church; which is the desolation of the whole world; and preaching this peace, is to war against Mankind. It is drawing a sword against the Rights of Nature and Nations: It is arming a body of Men with the magazines of confusion and uproar, which they never fail to thunder against all who dare to withstand them: It is a prerogative vested in them to set all Men at variance and strife, marking out for immediate destruction the opponents of their most impious usurpations. And when these arbitrary distinctions of *Orthodoxy* and *Heresy* have made the world quite drunk with religious rage; when this rage, this cruel and wide wasting pestilence, hath destroyed all before it; when the Orthodox, armed with inquisitions, and strengthened by massacres, has gained the possession of the minds of Men; and those *pious Ecclesiastics*, who led on the fanatic multitude to slaughter others, bind them down in chains themselves—then is the *Church at peace*. and the grand alliance with the State secured and confirmed.

There has been a long, and almost general charge, against the Clergy of all countries, for neglecting to preach and enforce, by their examples,* the great doctrines of Morality, the best stay of human society. Morality is the only Religion, which human society, considered as such, has any occasion to see practised. If a Man be really moral, neither the Civil Magistrate, nor his Fellow-Citizens, ought to concern themselves about *what* he believes, or *how* he believes. Our actions are in our power; they are sub-

ject.

* The Monks and Prior of St. Swithun threw themselves, one day, prostrate on the ground, and in the mire, (Swinith Multitude!) before Henry II. complaining, with many tears and much doleful lamentation, that the Bishop of Winchester, who was also their Abbot, had cut off three dishes from their table. "How many has he left you?" said the King. "Ten only," replied the disconsolate Monks. "I, myself," exclaimed the King, "never have more than three;—and I enjoin your Bishop to reduce you to the same number."—*Illum.*, chap. ix.

ject to the will, but our thoughts are no more so than our dreams. Belief necessarily follows evidence; and where the latter does not appear sufficient, a Man cannot believe if he would.

It was an excellent observation of Dryden's, that Priests of all Religions are the same; that riches and power are their ruling passions. To obtain possession of these, all Morality is dispensed with, and all Religion mocked. And, although we no longer see raised up those horrid piles, "from whence, midst clouds of whirling smoke, the groans of human victims, the crackling of their bones, and the frying of their still-panting bowels, formed a pleasing spectacle, and agreeable harmony, to Priests;"* yet, must they not flatter themselves that they are less intolerant. The manner of persecuting is, indeed, altered; but Persecution itself remains.

Montaigne had good cause for saying, in his familiar manner, "*That it is setting up one's own opinions*," *very high, to direct another to be tortured alive for them.*"

He spoke feelingly: For all the States of Europe were at that time blazing with religious martyrdoms; and it seemed to be the fundamental principle of all sects to execrate and extirpate each other.† In Britain, the law has been made the scourge of conscience, and compulsion has been added to intolerance. The banners of pious cruelty have waved triumphantly here, and the Civil Magistrate has been the first to stir up the zeal of Priests, and blow the fire of Persecution. The sentimental and accomplished author of Utopia caused Lutherans, to be whipt, tortured, and burnt alive in his presence.‡—

Granmer

* See the beautiful little Treatise of Beccaria on Crimes and Punishments—a book, to which I am proud to acknowledge, I owe my conversion to the cause of Freedom.

† "It seems to be almost a general rule, that in all Religions, except the true, no man will suffer martyrdom, who would not also insist it willingly on all that differ from him. The same zeal for speculative opinions is the cause of both."—*Hume*, vol. iv. p. 413.

‡ Burnet's History of the Reform, vol. i. p. 165.

Cranmer led Arians and Anabaptists to the stake.—Bonner, Bishop of London, tore off the beard of a weaver, who refused to relinquish his tenets; and, that he might give him a specimen of burning, he held his hand to the candle, till the sinews and veins shrunk and burst. In another instance, of the same kind, he scourged a Man until his arm ached with the exercise. Even Wriothesly, the Chancellor of England, directed a young and beautiful Woman (Anne Askue) to be stretched on the rack, for having differed with him on the real presence. With his own arm he tore her body almost asunder, and caused her afterwards to be committed to the flames. Infants, born at the stake, were thrown into the fire with their parents, as partaking of the same heresy.* Henry VIII. whose caprice was the bloody standard of the National Faith,† ruled all sects, by turns, with a rod of iron. His scholastic subtlety was equal to his cruelty. In one instance, he found sufficient reason for sending three Papists, with three Protestants, their companions, in the same procession to the stake.‡ His daughter, Mary, with less ingenuity, possessed the same rancorous and implacable zeal. In the space of three years, under the auspices of Bishop Gardiner, she committed two hundred and seventy-seven Protestants to the flames; besides those who were pursued, by imprisonments, fines, and confiscations.

Human

* “ A woman, in Guernsey, being near the time of her labour when brought to the stake, was thrown into such agitation by the torture, that her belly burst, and she was delivered in the midst of the flames. *One of the soldiers* immediately snatched the infant from the fire, and attempted to save it; but a *magistrate*, who stood by, ordered it to be thrown back: “ Being determined (he said) that nothing should survive, which sprung from so obstinate and heretical a parent.” *Hume*, vol. iv. p. 415.

† It was made high-treason *to believe*, that he was married to Anne of Cleves.

‡ The Protestants were Barnes, Gerrard, and Jerome; the Catholics, Abel, Fetherstone, and Powel.

Human sacrifices were, at this period, more frequent in the metropolis of England, than they had ever been in either Carthage or Mexico. The Ministers of Peace and Christianity were the active dispensers of death and deiolation; and the perpetrators of the most malignant murders, were clad in the pure mantle of Religion.* The following account of the execution of Lord Cobham, *A. D.* 1418, will be sufficient to prove the general temper of the Priests of those days. "Than was he layd upon an hurdle, " as though he had been a most heynouse traytoure " to the Crowne, and so drawne forth into Sainct " Gyles Felde, where as they had set up a new " paire of gallows. than he was hung up in a " chayne of yrone, and so consumed alyve in the " fyre; and so he departed hence moost Christealy. " how the Priests that tyme fared and cursed, re- " quiring the People not to pray for hym, but to " judge hym dampned in Hell, for that he departed " not in the obedience of the Pope, it were too long " to wrvte. And thys was done in the yeare of our " Lord MCCCC and XVIII."†—Thus has the Gospel been forced upon Mankind by the contaminated hand of the executioner, and the misapprehensions of the mind overpowered by terrors.

Uniformity

* " Human Nature (says Hume) appears not, on any occasion, so detestable, and, at the same time, so absurd, as in these Religious Persecutions, which sink Men below infernal spirits in wickedness, and below the beasts in folly." Yet was this persevering cruelty much inferior to what has been practised in other countries. In the Netherlands alone, from the time that the Edict of Charles V. was promulgated against the Reformers, there had been 50,000 persons hanged, beheaded, buried alive, or burnt, on account of Religion. France exhibited scenes more terrible. Yet, the progress of the new opinion, instead of being checked, was forwarded by these persecutions.

† The trial and examination of Sir John Oldcastle, collected by John Bale.

Uniformity of opinion cannot be the result of force. General orthodoxy cannot be the creature of mandatory law.* What a strange establishment is that, which is thus founded on the principles of Fraud, Cruelty, and Corruption, and distinguishes those only in the society of human Beings, who are the votaries of its superstitions? It is to declare that Men are infallible, and that the councils of the Vatican, and the synods of England, are alike entitled to our veneration and obedience. Even, in this most *righteous* reign, the tests are suffered to be eluded.—Gibbon was a lord of trade, David Hume was pensioned for maintaining aristocratic doctrines, and Beattie was allowed 500l. a-year for writing against him in defence of revealed Religion; and, if report be true, the celebrated Adam Smith, author of the *Wealth of Nations*, and a Commissioner of the Excise in Scotland, lived and died an Atheist.† So much for intolerance and holy villainy.

Reason has at length arose to undraw the veil of the pretended ark of Superstition; and that sanctimonious knavery, which endeavours to impose on
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* “ When Charles V. who had long been marked for his intolerant maxims, retired to the Monastery of St. Just, in Estremadura, he amused himself with the construction of clocks and watches; and thence remarked, How impracticable the object was in which he had so much employed himself during his grandeur; and how impossible that he, who never could frame two machines that would go exactly alike, could ever be able to make all mankind concur in the same belief and opinion.”—*Hume*, vol. iv. p. 426.

† The Assembly of Jamaica proposed, in the last century, to banish all the *Jews* from the island, *because* they were the descendants of the crucifiers of Jesus.—N. B. There are *Slaves* in that colony.

Bayle says, that a General, of the Jesuits at Rome, once exulting in his greatness, and that of his order, thus expressed himself to a friend: “ *Eccoti di questor camera governa Roma, che dico Roma? Governo tutta l’ Italia—che dico Italia? Governo Europa estessa, e non solamente Europa, matutta il mundo.* ”—“ I will tell you, in this very chamber, I govern Rome—What am I talking about? Rome! I govern all Italy—What do I say? Italy! I govern Europe itself; and not Europe alone, but the whole world.”

the credulity of the People, and those fierce knaves who profit by their ignorance and fanaticism, will be swept off the face of the earth with the *besom* of destruction. Before long, our country will be cleansed and purified of those religious robbers and state pirates, of that confederation against the public, which devours our harvests and fruits like the grasshoppers of Egypt. Persecution, the furious offspring of intolerance, shall make way for a day of mental festivity; the Jew shall be restored to Society, and the Infidel to the Rights of Man. Men of all sects, of all tongues, and of all denominations, shall be equal parts of that great governmental machine, to be raised by the majestic hand of the People. In such a Government, this alliance between Church and State, this deep-rooted system of Inequality must end, Bigotry can receive no sanction, Persecution no assistance *

Besides

* On the English Clergy, Bishop Burnet makes the following remark:—"That he always believes well of Laymen, till he sees cause to change his mind, though, as to Churchmen, it is otherwise with him; for he has seen so much amiss in that profession, that he is always inclined to think ill of them, till he sees cause to think otherwise." The observation of Voltaire, from what he could collect during his residence here, was, that every country Curate would be as absolute within the petty district of his parish, as ever the Pope was in Rome. It is certainly a melancholy reflection, that our Clergy are more ambitious of the names of good Jockeys, good Fiddlers, good Dancers, than devout Ministers of Religion. One of this body of jolly fellows was seen at Bolton, in Lancashire, marching at the head of a recruiting party, with a cockade in his hat, and his gown and cassock on him, and so drunk, that it was with difficulty he could keep time with the fife and drum. Some months ago, I saw a French Priest, habited in a scarlet uniform, with a sword in his hand, and a sash round his waist, preceding a drummer and fifer, as a serjeant;—this was in a village on the banks of the Thames. Truly, indeed, it may be said, that the present war is the cause of the Pope and the Protestant interest.

The Cardinal de Crema, the legate of Pope Calixtus, in a public harangue, declared it to be an unpardonable enormity, that a Priest should *dare* to consecrate and touch the body of Christ immediately after he had risen from the side of a strumpet: for that was the decent
appellation

Besides the general misery which these sons of mischief bring upon Mankind, by their constituting an essential body in the State, there is a serious evil arising to the community from the great expence which is required to support them, and from the manner in which the property destined to that object is collected. The tenth part of the produce of the earth is surrendered by the oppressed Farmer, to feed the luxury, and satisfy the pride of the Parson.—Tythes are a great discouragement, both to the improvements of the landlord, and to the cultivation of the farmer. The one cannot venture to make the most important, which are generally the most expensive improvements; nor the other to raise the most valuable, which are generally too the most expensive crops—when the Church, which lays out no part of the expence, is to share so very largely in the profit. “Agriculture is discouraged by every constitution of landed property, which lets in those who have no concern in the improvement to a participation of the profit. But, of all institutions, which are in this way, adverse to cultivation and improvement, none is so noxious as that of *tythes*. A claimant here enters into the produce, who contributed no assistance whatever to the production. When years, perhaps, of toil and care have matured an improvement; when the husbandman sees new crops ripening to his skill and industry, the moment he is ready to put his sickle to the grain, he finds himself compelled to divide his harvest with a stranger. Tythes are a tax, not only upon industry, but upon that industry which feeds Mankind; upon that species of exertion, which it

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appellation which he gave to the wives of the Clergy. But it happened that, the very next night, the officers of Justice, breaking into a disorderly house, found the Cardinal *in bed with a courtesan*; an incident, which threw such ridicule upon him, that he immediately stole out of the kingdom.—*Hume*, chap. vi.—

is the aim of all wise laws to cherish and promote; and to uphold and excite which, composes the main benefit that the community receives from the whole system of Trade, and the success of Commerce."— Thus, the Clergy, considered only in their political character and situation, are an absolute nuisance to the community; they compose so numerous a class of the privileged orders, that the weight they give to it, of itself overbalances every good which is pretended to be derived from their institution.

Government arises out of Society, and is naturally extended and confined to, and bounded by the *ground* and *reason*, and the *end* and *purpose* of association—which is the public good. The authority of Governors, therefore, ought to be extended and confined to those things *only*, in which the *good* or *hurt*, the *safety* or *danger* of the Society are concerned: Consequently, they have *no authority* to *oblige* or *restrain* any individual, but in such cases as immediately interest the society. This principle is a just foundation and support of universal toleration, or else it *will not* support any toleration at all. To this it may be objected, that those professions which do not make the motives of human actions depend on any future expectation of reward or punishment, are not only alarming, but *dangerous* to society, as they may either weaken or take off Men's obligations to Virtue; and, therefore, *they* ought not to be tolerated. But we should remember, that many principles which either do, or have prevailed among Christians, *may*, in *their* consequences, be dangerous to society, as they may either weaken or take off Men's obligations to Virtue; and, therefore, *they* ought not to be tolerated. Such are the doctrines of fate, absolute election, and reprobation, &c. This equally applies to any other religious principle, which, it may be *pretended*, has a dangerous tendency. This consideration, alone, will always prove a sufficient reason against toleration,

tion, when those *in power* consider themselves as the *sole judges* of such principles : And thus we may take an eternal leave of toleration. But, even admitting that the principles above alluded to, are injurious in their consequences, yet, it by no means alters the case. For if one principle, which *may*, in its *consequences*, be hurtful to society, ought to be suppressed, *all* principles, which *may*, in their consequences, have a like tendency, should be suppressed also—whether those who profess them are *obliged*, in conscience, to publish them or not. And, therefore, *all other* principles, which those *in power* might take it into their heads, *may*, in their *consequences*, be *injurious* to society, *will*, of course, be suppressed on the same ground, whether such consequences may result from them or not.* “ This *may be*, and that *may be*, of a *dangerous tendency*,” are as much the cant phrases of subtle theologians, as “ *this is not the time*,” and “ *the People are not sufficiently enlightened*,” are of courtiers.

That a Man who does not believe as we do, that one who denies the doctrine of a future life, or that even an Atheist *cannot* be under the obligations of conscience, is a *vulgar error*. For, as good and evil,

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right

* The same argument which is here used against toleration, the reader will recollect, is alike used against political opinion; and the Liberty of the Press. “ *Dangerous tendency*,” is an expression, that rulers can, at any time, employ against Truth, more especially, against such truths as have a *tendency* to overthrow or unmask their most insolent and abominable usurpations. “ *Dangerous tendency*,” is to be found likewise *in many of the sentences* which have lately been pronounced on *sedition* persons, and which will probably, before long, be pronounced *on me*; though, I call God to witness, the only object of my life has been, and is, to *do good to my fellow-creatures*. Whatever Despots may *think*, I *know*, that to endeavour to open Men’s eyes, is to comply with the *will of God*, who has given *me* REASON so to employ it; and *them* REASON so to receive it. I never will believe, that God gave Man Reason, that he might reason himself out of his reason. In spite, therefore, of Earth or Hell, I shall go on to reason after that mode that best pleases me, as most conducive to the happiness of others, and to my own peace of mind.

right and wrong, have their foundation in *nature*, and are what they are when considered *abstractedly* from, and independent of any considerations of a future life; so the obligations arising from these are *relative* to, and *bind* the consciences both of Theists, and Deists, and Atheists alike—Conscience being nothing else but an *awakened* or *affecting* sense of the obligations we are under, and of our having acted *agreeably* with, or *contrary* to the sense we have of those obligations. And as the Infidel must be under all the obligations that arise from the consideration of his present existence, and his present circumstances, and from the relation he now stands in to his fellow-creatures: So he is as liable to have an affecting sense of those obligations as a believer; at least, the question is, *Why should he not?*—Suppose an Infidel, by observing the bad use that crafty designing Men make of their doctrines, in order to carry on their base and vile designs, by which much mischief is, and has been done to our species, should think that such doctrines do *more harm* than good; and, therefore, it were better, upon the whole, that that they were banished out of the world, and that he should think it his duty to *contribute all he can* towards it; the questions then will be, Whether he will not be *obliged*, in conscience, to *propagate* his own principles? and, Whether he is not *as likely* to have an *affecting sense* of this obligation, as a believer may be supposed to have of any obligation he finds himself under, since he *is* as *nearly* related to, and ought to be as much concerned for, his own and his fellow-creatures good, as any believer can be? Were an Infidel to be corrected by his fellow-members in civil society, for his thus acting consonant to the obligation he conceives himself to be under, the question is, Whether this would not be, properly speaking, *persecuting him* for acting according to his conscience? That the restraining an Infidel from acting
according;

according to his conscience, can be no injury to him, is also a vulgar error: Since the restraint referred to, exposes him to the *stings* of a wounded conscience, which Solomon seems to consider as the greatest of evils; and, therefore, a conscientious Infidel (which is not an unnatural nor preposterous character, so far as *consciousness* makes a part of it) suffers as much from such restraint, as a conscientious believer. *The spirit of a Man will sustain his infirmity, but a wounded spirit, who can bear?* The spirit of a Man (or a sense of a Man's having acted uprightly according to his conscience) will sustain his infirmity, (will keep him from sinking under those afflictions and infirmities he is liable to); but a wounded spirit (or the stings of a guilty conscience) who can bear? An Infidel is as much a Man, or an intelligent rational Being, as a Believer; and, therefore, must be equally under all the obligations, arising from Reason and Nature, which are relative to himself and his fellow-creatures; and, consequently, must be equally exposed to the lashes of an evil conscience, when he breaks through them. An Infidel is related to, and dependent upon civil Society and a public good, as much as a Believer; and, therefore, is as much obliged, both in duty and interest, to answer the obligations that naturally flow from such relation and dependency; and is as likely to be influenced, that is, excited to, and restrained from action, by those obligations, as a Believer—The obligations of Justice, of Gratitude, and of Benevolence, being all relative to, and naturally tending to influence *all Men alike*.

The experience of fifteen centuries, if not of all times, should have taught rulers the impossibility of establishing uniformity, by the rigours of penal statutes. Public ignorance alone, has authorised this unjust alliance between the Church and the State, which will doubtless cease, when the cause is withdrawn. Is it not a disgrace to the Governors of European

ropean Nations, that the happy and peaceful Peasants of Switzerland have ever set them the example of Moderation and Tolerance? I have spent the most delicious moments of my early youth among that innocent and hospitable nation; I have traversed it from one extremity to the other, and no where have I found *one instance* of that intolerant and impolitic system, which proscribes the free converse between Man and his Creator, which imposes a gloomy silence on the human mind, checks the effusions of the heart, and scourges conscience in its most sensible and tender parts. A more pacific and liberal policy marks the genius of the Helvetic Cantons.—I have been a frequent eye-witness to the decorum and simplicity of their worship. In the *same Church* I have repeatedly heard High Mass performed in the morning, and the Lutheran Service performed in the evening: At the same Altar, where I have seen the Host uplifted, and the Sacrament administered, according to the ritual of the Roman Church, I have seen also a Lutheran officiate agreeably to the maxims of the Primitive Reformers. Here was no pollution—no rancour—no unchristian Persecution—no Penal Laws blazing a sanguinary proscription—no bloody Priests to pacify—no State alliance to be soothed and wedded. But, the same altar, before which Men of different religious persuasions presented themselves, transmitted, in one undistinguished column, the incense of prayer to the Eternal. Happy Switzers! Illustrious progeny of the immortal TELL! Ye have laid the axe to the root of intolerance, by the decorous and moral conduct of your Priests—Ye have taught Despots humanity, by the mildness of your Laws, and the dignified virtue of your Senates. The fangs of Tyranny are unknown to you—Free as that wild nature which surrounds you, ye mourn not the loss of your dearest relatives torn by the boisterous hand of power, to avenge its odious

odious quarrels, and to drench the earth with human gore—ye are not cursed with *tythes*, nor oppressed by taxgatherers; but by your harmonious and benevolent maxims, ye have proved Intolerance to be Injustice, and Toleration itself to be a Crime!*

In every nation, the interest of the People should be the supreme law. Every division of interests among the several members of civil life, is not only a preparatory step to Plunder, Tumult, and Oppression, but, from the complication of jarring interests, which inevitably arises from the opposite views of each separate division, society *must* become a state of warfare, and its government, a mere chaos. The sole ends of political justice, are obedience to established law (the result of the general will) and abstinence from injury. Nevertheless, it is the interest and the title of the privileged orders to disclaim obedience to those rules which every unprivileged member of the community, is proud to obey. They demand an exemption, which is nothing less than a privilege of doing wrong with impunity. They call in Religion to their aid, they misconstrue and torture its precepts, to sanction their injustice. And when we oppose, to their impious Follies and Falsehoods, the holy maxims of Nature and Reason, which are the true and antient Religion of the world, the simple “harmony of the spheres;” when we, in the name of suffering humanity, denounce their institution as originating in Fraud, Rapine, Violence, and Murder; when we expose their flagitious pretensions.

* The Address of the Quakers to James II. who was a bigotted Roman Catholic, is remarkable for its plainness and simplicity, and breathes, in a few words, the sum of Religious Toleration. “We are come to testify our sorrow for the death of our good Friend Charles, and our joy for thy being made our Governor. We are told thou art not of the persuasion of the Church of England, no more than we: *Wherefore, we hope thou wilt grant us the same liberty which thou allowest thyself.* Which, doing, we wish thee all manner of happiness.”

sions and guilty practices, then wrapping themselves under the mystic robe of an immaculate privilege—they hold up to our imperfect sight, the rotten parchments of antiquity and precedent by which they hold their tenures, and tell us 'tis our CHARTER.—If we enquire into the *Right*, they command us to be silent, and accuse us of Atheism and Anarchy; if we *insist*, they assemble around the boiling cauldron of human miseries, and, by their incantations, divine the murmurs of the People to be the bubblings of Sedition; and they proclaim the Throne and the Church to be in danger, as if the Throne and the Church were holy tabernacles, defended by consuming fires; as if a whole nation were to be made miserable, rather than that the Throne and the Church should be endangered or not upheld. Blasphemous pigmies! they do not consider that the voice of the People is the voice of God, and that the murmurings of the People denote the awful wrath of God. They do not consider, that He who rules worlds, is a God of inflexible Justice, and, consequently, that privilege, which is injustice, is obnoxious to Him: That He is a LEVELLER of all Men, and of all ranks, and regards, with equal eye, the vast fabric of Nature which he has reared: That to oppose Equality, is to oppose Him: That Punishment is in His hands, and Vengeance in those of the People: And that *they* have every thing to *fear*, who, by defying Him, provoke the mighty rage of a Nation.

Wherever there is an unequal division of the members of Society, there must necessarily be an unjust distribution of the parts of Government. Thus, the millions of People, or their Representatives, can compose but a very subordinate branch of the Legislature, when it is in the power of the Aristocracy, whether formed of one or two parts, to negative or control

control their operations. A *part* becomes greater than the *whole*, when the will of a King, or of a few hundred Nobles, is paramount to that of the Nation in its collective or representative capacity. It is true, they may style themselves the Nation, but the experience of their conduct, will always give the lie to the assertion: It will prove them to be an embodied phalanx, unrestrained by remorse, and uncontrolled by popular opinion; it will prove that they never form any calculations on the mischiefs which their evil administration may bring upon a country, but that they decree rewards, honours, and glory to themselves, when they merit infamy and disgrace.—No State can exist, for any time, perfectly secure from a mixture of Tyranny and civil dissension, which is not erected on the broad basis of Liberty and Equality. To give to the law an unbridled and indiscriminate operation on every Citizen, is no more than to form a Government in conformity to the above principles. In such a system then, whatever grows out of the social order, should be regarded as a nettle that retards the general progress of fructification, poisons the salubrity of the whole, and ought to be instantly weeded out. When the People govern themselves (which they ought never to lose sight of for a single moment) such abominable jimcrack nonsense, as the *balance of power*, will never prophane our political creed, nor will any body of Citizens, dare to separate from the community, and to erect themselves into a corporation, enjoying exclusive privileges, and flourishing at the common expence of the Nation. The good of the People consists in the general diffusion of comforts, but Aristocracy collects into a very partial mass, and appropriates exclusively to itself, that quantity of happiness which is the natural inheritance of all human Beings. As this bold and malignant stroke against the happiness of
Man,

Man, cannot be attempted without rejecting all notions of common good, nor executed without embroiling the whole human race, we are justified in drawing this plain inference, that the institution of privileged orders is usurpation, and its continuance criminal. Besides, the obvious tendency of every species of public monopoly, whether of honors, distinctions, or traffic, is to perpetuate errors, prejudices, corruptions, dependence, and to enrich and exalt a *few*, by the impoverishment, vassalage, ignorance, and venality of the *many*. If, therefore, their continuance depend (as it does) solely on national ignorance; if you remove this ignorance, Men will see plainly, that Freedom is indigenous to every soil:— They will see, that the laws may be impartially administered, the sun shine, the grass grow, and the waters flow in their accustomed channels, without the very *expensive* aid of privileged orders. They will resume the Government of themselves, and scorn to be conducted like children in leading strings by their equals, by Men, liable to the same infirmities of nature as themselves, and, too often, unpossessed of either Talents, Knowledge, or Virtue, to direct the helm of empire. Rulers will always consult their own interests in the conduct of Government. To assure, then, a good Government, those only should be made Governors whose happiness is immediately involved in its good or evil administration. If the *few* govern the *many*, the interests of the *few* will be alone pursued; but, if the *many* govern themselves, the *few* will be comprehended in it, and the interests of the *whole* will be constantly followed. The sooner, therefore, the People claim their *Right*, the better will be their condition, and the happier that of posterity. To this truth, I am ready to alledge the evidence of America, which *does* flourish in wealth and peace, *without* either Kings, Bishops,

Bishops,* or Nobles; and which is, of course, a proof, that other countries *can* do the same. At all events, the Government of America is conducted on a *cheaper* scale; and, I verily believe, that the People of that country are *happier* without them.— There is, at least, a strong presumption in favour of this fact: For the American Constitutions happily retain, within themselves, a principle of quiet Reformation: knowing that Man is yet in his cradle as to political institutions, and that every day will produce a greater expansion and energy of mind, when left uncontrolled by the terrors of an inquisitorial Despotism, they leave their Government open to *Innovations*, not inimical to Truth, Justice, and Liberty. Already, they have three times revised their Constitutions, and never were either Kingcraft or Priestcraft so much as mentioned by any one of them. They had lived under the influence of both; and they had fought and bled to relinquish them. It was not likely, therefore, that they should again harbour in their bosoms, what they deemed snakes, and what they had magnanimously rejected as a pollution and an abhorrence. “The whole expence of their Federal Government, founded on the system of Representation, and extending over a country *nearly ten times as large as England*, is but L.135,000 Sterling.”† In our Country, where the People ‡
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* The American Bishops form no part of the State establishment. I desire always to be understood when speaking of Bishops and Priests, as considering them in their relative affinity to the State.

† By the last year's statement, it has increased L.45,000, making, in the whole, L.180,000 Sterling. It may not be amiss here to observe, by way of contrast, that L.200,000 Sterling money, of the People of Great Britain, goes annually out of the Nation to pay the King of Sardinia for taking care of his own territories, and L.700,000 Sterling it is understood, is about to be given to the King of Prussia for aiding us in invading the territories of others.

‡ By the People, I mean the *whole* People; or, in other words, the majority of the People.

have no more share in the Government, than the Negro Slave in the West Indies, or the cattle in their fields, the money collected for public uses, amounts to the enormous sum of TWENTY-FIVE MILLION STERLING, without including the expenditures of the present War, and the lavishment of blood and treasure, which must yet be made during the course of the *four or five ensuing years before the war will be concluded*. From this comparison, it is not unfair to conclude, that it is the interest of all feudal and military Establishments to discountenance Reforms, because their very existence *is at stake* if they permit them.

Instructed from their childhood to believe themselves endowed with talents, which are alone the acquisitions of labour and experience, and accustomed to the menial submission,* and prostituted flattery
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* The following anecdotes will sufficiently attest the opinion which Aristocrats have of themselves, and the opinion which they wish other People to have of them:—"In the reign of James I. a Waterman, belonging to a Man of quality, having a squabble with a Citizen about his fare, showed his badge, the crest of his master, which happened to be a swan; and thence insisted on better treatment from the Citizen. But, the other replied, that he did not trouble his head about that *goose*. For this offence, he was summoned before the Marshall's Court, was fined, as having *approbriously defamed the Nobleman's crest, by calling the swan a goose*; and was, in effect, reduced to beggary."—Sir Richard Granville had thought himself ill used by the Earl of Suffolk, in a law-suit; and he was accused of having said, of that Noble Lord, That he was a *base Lord*. The evidence against him was somewhat lame; yet, for this slight offence, insufficiently proved, he was condemned to pay a fine of L.8000; *one half to the Earl, the other to the King*.—Sir George Markham following a chace where Lord Darcy's huntsman was exercising his hounds, kept closer to the dogs than was thought proper by the huntsman, who, besides other rudeness, gave him foul language, which Sir George returned with a stroke of his whip. The fellow threatened to complain to his master: the Knight replied, If his master should justify such insolence, he *would serve him in the same manner*. For this, Sir George was fined L.10,000. *So fine a thing was it in those days to be a Lord!* a natural reflection of Lord Landowne's, in relating this incident.—The People, in vindicating their Liberties from the authority of the Crown, *sbrew off also the yoke of Nobility*.—Hume, chap. vii. p. 304.

of those who surround them, the Aristocracy despise every sort of mental improvement, and reject, with indignation, the lessons of Morality and Patriotism. Knowledge, they regard as the occupation of ignoble Beings, and deem it totally unnecessary to the establishment of their character and consequence in society. Their actions, therefore, are weighed not in the scale of Utility, but of Grandeur; they are judged, not in proportion to their Excellence, but to their Brilliancy; not to their Justice, but to their Greatness; not to their Reason, but to their Eccentricity. Hence, pomp, decoration, and varnish, occupy all the intermediate stages, from the Throne, down to the meanest Exciseman, until, from an overpeering and mountainous system of inequality, the disfranchised part of the human race is levelled to the condition of the beasts of the field, and the equality of Slavery distorts and vilifies the whole of the social organization.

From this corporation, where Birth supplies the place of Abilities, Virtue, Knowledge, and Experience; where Fortune alone doles out pre-eminence, the Executive Officers of the Nation are selected.— Thus, the rewards of the services of great and good Men, the common motives to magnanimous and illustrious actions, are applied to those darlings of a blind and capricious fortune, in the same manner as Superstition dedicates to images of brass and stone, the adoration due to Eternal Nature. In such a tranquil chaos of prostituted sentiment, misguided reason, imprudent and injudicious favour, Genius is every where persecuted, and Virtue ridiculed; and, in their stead, a multitude of diversified signs and ornaments, command, in an imperious tone, respect to Mediocrity, Meanness, and Crimes. “Princes (says Sir William Temple) cannot run into every corner of their dominions, to look out for persons fit for their service; they cannot see far with their own

eyes, nor hear with their own ears, and must, for the most part, do both with those of other men, or else chuse among such smaller numbers as are most in their way; and these are such, generally, as make their court, or give their attendance, in order to advance themselves to honors, fortunes, to places, and employments; *and are usually the least worthy of Men, and better servants to themselves than to the Government.*"

Privileges and rewards are two very different things. The one gives beforehand an exemption from law, the other is granted *after* a deserving action is performed. Privilege is a bribe, but reward is an honour. The impolicy of granting privilege is more evident, when you reflect that it is commonly bestowed, not on those who have distinguished themselves by their public spirit, and their exertions in behalf of the People, but on those who are marked for the services which they have rendered to the Court. Besides, privilege is intended to exalt and distinguish one or a few individuals from the rest of the community, their merit being always the pretence. Now, as the Government is made for the People, and as the elevation of the privileged Citizen is built on some supposed meritorious action, performed by him for their good, it is obvious, that they, who are to derive benefit from the effects of this action, are alone the competent judges, whether he be deserving of such marked pre-eminence or not. To this, we may add, that as they are to revere and keep at a respectful distance from this Man, who is thus made a God of, their reverence would be more submissive, when it emanated from their own free-will; the result of that obligation of gratitude which they felt towards patrician prowess or patrician virtue. Privileges, therefore, considered in this sense (and, indeed, it is the only sense in which they can, or ought to be considered) should be conferred by the
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voice of the People, who are THE SOVEREIGN, and not by the whimsy humor of a King, who is, himself, but a great privileged individual, and the SERVANT OF THE NATION. Privilege is also the inheritance of babes even in their cradles; and while yet helpless and tender from their years, before their capacities are known, or their understandings formed or ripened, they lay claim to that veneration, which a long course of experience rarely entitles the most brilliant genius, richly cultivated, to enjoy. The little squalling brat, because he *happens* to issue from a privileged womb, is born to be your King, or your Legislator and Judge, before it be known whether Virtue or Vice, Wisdom or Ignorance, most predominate in his composition—before it be known, whether he will make a bloody Tyrant or an honest Man. But rewards, form a very striking contrast to this foolish system. The force of the action must be felt, before it will be remunerated—the propriety of the reward acknowledged, before it can be given: Besides, as rewards afford neither dispensation from the influence of laws, nor impunity to crimes; as they present no instance of informality in the civil order, by granting distinctions to any individual, nor claim any other degree of respect or esteem, than what every good Man is willing to give to acknowledged merit—it necessarily follows, that in every Government, whose basis is Justice, these alone will be suffered, and privilege punished as a crime. The heroes of antient Rome, aspired to wear the laurel wreath, not as the *privilege*, but as the *reward* of approved virtues. This obtained, they marched on foot to the Capitol, amidst the exulting crowd, offered an oblation to their Gods, and retired in peace to the plough. But the moment a Man is initiated into the eleusinian mysteries of modern honors, his heart is steeled against every sentiment of common interest; all his former exertions for the People are

then turned against them, and, from the dignified character of MAN, he dwindles into an OPPRESSOR.

The Man, whose emblazoned titles bespeak an ancestry as old as Tyranny itself, and who boasts that he is an hereditary legislator or judge, ought to unite, in his person, every natural and acquired accomplishment essential to the constitution of either of these characters. But daily experience demonstrates, that however transmissible rank and fortune may be, talents, and powers of application, are not to be derived from such a source. By legislating, therefore, for a People, whose genius, character, and laws, they are unacquainted with, they preclude the industrious Citizen from all honourable enterprise and patriot exertion. The encouragement which is held out to eminent abilities, is such as to beget despair—the human mind has to penetrate through a long, dark, and dreary vista of exclusion, before it can reach the temple of honor, and achieve the conquest of fame.*

Born to the immediate possession of every luxury, with every appetite pampered, and every sordid wish gratified, the haughty Nobles of the earth are habituated to think, that Industry is dishonourable for a *Gentleman*, and Debauchery, of every kind, the characteristic of a Man of Fashion. In the gay circles of levity and rank, where sympathy of sentiment is so congenial to each of their devotees, a peculiar language, a peculiar friendship, and a peculiar system of morals, improperly called the *law of honor*, regulates the standard of fashionable demeanour.—And what is this same law of honor? It is a law, which, being “constituted by Men occupied in the pursuit of pleasure, and for the mutual convenience of such Men, will be found, as might be expected
from

* By fame, I mean the good opinion of Mankind.

from the character and design of the law-makers, to be, in most instances, favourable to the licentious indulgence of the natural passions. Thus, it allows of Fornication, Adultery, Drunkenness, Prodigality, Duelling, and Revenge, in the extreme; and lays no fires upon the virtues opposite to these.* Mark the baneful and pestiferous progress of the privileged order in any country; mark its contagious effects even in Britain, where it acts indiscriminately on every denomination of Citizens. Under the semblance of a figure of light, it directs the tone and manners of the age; it laughs at Virtue, Science, and Liberty; it glosses over the most enormous crimes, with the varnish of elegant folly—poisons the innocence of our hamlets, and corrupts the integrity of our cities. Thus, by seducing the People, under the captivating allurements, of pleasure, to imitate the example of their *bettors*, they involve all ranks of Men, and, more especially, the lower orders of society, against whose impetuosity the fence of morals opposes but a feeble barrier, into scenes of infamy, wretchedness, and disgrace. Thus the youth of both sexes are forced from the peaceful threshold of domestic life, and plunged into a sea of trouble and consummate misery. Our females flock to the cities, and a flood of prostitution is let loose upon the land. Our comely young Men forsake their homes, and, renouncing the bright power of *thought*, the rights of a social being, and the much boasted claim of an Englishman—a *trial by Jury*, enlist as soldiers; the lowest, most degrading, and most calamitous occupation which can befall a human being, when he has no interest or share in that Government which he is to defend, and whose injuries he is to avenge. Thus, every principle of moral obligation

* Thus speaks an Archdeacon of the Church of England!—See Patey's Moral and Political Philosophy.

obligation is smothered among Men. Parental affection and filial duty are torn asunder; all the virtues, Love, Tenderness, Friendship, Marriage, Benevolence, are cut up by the roots, and Government itself lights up war in society. Good GOD! is it for this, that a band of Spies and Informers are loosened upon us; is it for this, that the Rights of the People must be weakened, in order to strengthen the hands of our Governors? That our own Countrymen associate against us to benumb the reasoning faculty of Man, and to degrade him as a moral agent? Is it for this, that our native country is converted into a vast prison? Or, alas! is it so lost and sunk in crimes, that Virtue, Patriotism, and Genius are become loathsome abortions, which it is proper to transport to the furthestmost extremity of the globe, as fit companions of felons and prostitutes? If this be the case, it were better to be a colonist in Botany Bay, than a slave in Britain!

Father of Goodness! prosper our suffering Brethren on their passage from this enslaved land: Let the Apostles of Liberty, the Fathers of their Country, be fanned with pleasing gales to that cavern of death in which they are to be entombed: Let my beloved friend, Gerrald—let Margarott, Muir, Skirving, and Palmer, be a light to lighten the Gentiles, and to be the glory of the Indian world!—Strengthen, I beseech Thee, the hearts and *hands* of us who remain behind—Be Thou a shield to them, and a sword of terror in our hands. ARM us with courage and fortitude to persevere in thy Cause; and inspirit us to bear, with firmness, even the insulting mockery of those, who thirst for our blood, and who long to see the executioner bathing his hands in our smoking entrails and streaming hearts!

Fellow Citizens! they charge us with a desire of overthrowing Government, and involving society in disorder; whereas, we wish to purge Government of its

its anarchy, in order that Society may become desirable. For, believe me, I would rather live in the world, when it is run wildest, than tamely breathe under a Government which is nothing but disorder, and which destroys all those affections that would flourish unsullied, even in a disorganised stage of society. You are deceived by *names* and *appearances*. Keep yourselves aloof for a moment, and examine it apart from your condition as Citizens under it; view it through all its balance of powers, its equipoise of interests, its complete machinery—and then ask, Who are the Anarchists and the Levellers? and where is Anarchy to be found?

What would consign other Men to eternal shame, is received with exultation into the service of Aristocracy; and even gives, to the splendid villain, a glare and superiority over the Man of worth and probity. Taking advantage of the general disposition to servility, they strike, without relaxation, at the root of Wisdom and Virtue. They have transformed the wide field of Genius into a barren and unprofitable waste; true Learning being depressed, has been fostered by the indigent; and the human mind, forbidden to range in Freedom, has been forced to contribute in riveting, more closely, the fetters of Men. Orators, Poets, Historians, Painters, have flown from the tranquil seclusion of the academic bowers, to the environs of courts and palaces, where, basking in the meridian of royal or noble sunshine, they have idolized Tyrants, Fools, and Knaves, and blasphemed Mankind, for bread.

If any Nation expect to prosper, under the shade of Freedom, it must cherish Equal Laws, and all the Virtues: Without these, there may be *noble lords*, wealthy merchants, and large manufactories, but no public Liberty, no Justice, no love of our Country. For when Virtue is destroyed, independence is lost; and when selfishness rules, meanness
and

and venality will characterise the governed. But the mischiefs of the privileged system is extended to still greater lengths, by the injuries which the Nobility bring upon *themselves* in consequence of their profligate and extravagant mode of living; by which they are inevitably reduced to poverty and dependence on the court, while ruin and necessity are entailed on their unhappy families. To remedy this evil, and to obviate any discredit which might befall the *corps*, from the exclusion or beggary of its members, places are invented without number, and pensions granted without shame, to relieve their wants, and repair their tattered fortunes: For you must never forget, that the privilege of *being idle* cannot be dispensed with by a Nobleman. Those very prejudices of State which have been his undoing, debar him from engaging in any *honest* employment, because inconsistent with the rank, and *beneath the dignity of his family*. To the ruined Noble there remains this dismal alternative, in the use of which he incurs an equal degree of guilt—either to assume the mask of Patriotism, or to plunge into the vortex of the Court. He *must* set up either for a Patriot or a Courtier. Should he adopt the latter, he must renounce his principles (if he had before any) and become a detestable tool to a more detestable administration. In this instance he is criminal. If he should take to the line of a Patriot (and there are such, who spring up and go off like mushrooms) he is equally criminal, because his profession is not genuine. The Man who becomes a Patriot from need or revenge, is unworthy of public trust; for, when either of these infirmities is appeased, his *ends* being answered, he will revert to his old principles. His exertions are not for *you*, but for *himself*: his humanity is feigned, and his public spirit temporary. His zeal against administration is not on *your* account, but on *his own*; and just at the moment you flatter yourselves

yourselves that you have indeed gained a real friend, at the very instant that you are fondly caressing this idol of your own making, his eye, in a fine phrenzy, rolling from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven, deigns to cast a wistful squint on some snug lucrative sinecure, as the reward of his popular exertions and *opposition* to the Court. The ministry catch his eye, and darting instantly on him, as a hungry lioness upon her prey, they seize their object, and he is never heard of more. Such is the transit of these blazing meteors, which, in their passage, illumine the country, but shortly after disappearing, leave it in darkness, sorrow, and amazement. Such are your *Alarmists*, whose exquisite sensibility revolts at the approach of day, whose humanity shudders at the MAJESTY OF THE PEOPLE, when crowned with the olive of Peace, and robed in flames of Justice.

Intrigue and Corruption are the only *trades* of the Aristocracy. In these they excel; by these they enrich themselves. By such criminal means, they monopolize all the offices of the Church, the Law, and the Army: In fact, these three professions seem to have been purposely made for them. They first corrupt you, and then they intrigue against you; they purchase *you*, in order to sell *themselves*: and the dearer the purchase, the higher the sale. The civil functions constituted by the People, can, at all times, be performed at so reasonable a rate as to preclude numbers from aspiring to them for the *sake of the profits*. But SCRATS,* with less skill, are more expensive

* As this publication will, most likely, be read in other parts, as well as in Sheffield, I must here observe, that the word "Scrats," is the denomination given in that town, to those automatons, who are called "Aristocrats" in the other parts of the country. The former word has a singular advantage over the other. *ime*, In the mode of enunciating it, as it cannot be uttered by a Patriot without a certain contraction

expensive agents. And although the public property is not levied under the scandalous design of supporting this body of Men, but under some fictitious name, yet, you all know, and you all *feel*, that it is applied to no other purpose; you cannot be ignorant that it is squandered upon Placemen and Pensioners; and that taxes have no other origin. It has already been observed, that the Church, the Law, and the Army, were framed for them; it is proved by that grinding and oppressive system of taxation on the general labour, which is appropriated to the use of the privileged orders, and to fulfil the shameful engagements of hereditary and perpetual rewards.— Thus you are parcelled out like herds of cattle, and your Property said to be protected by laws, only that the privileged orders, under the sanction of those laws, may seize, and share it when they think proper. But this is not all. As the Aristocracy are the mere nominal agents of the public, and as they almost always execute by deputies, the trust reposed in them, although they are well paid by us (or rather by themselves) for what they ought to do in person, it is beyond a doubt, that these deputies, *without the*
Aristocracy,

contraction of the left part of the mouth, which orators call “the look of contempt.” *2do*, The Greek word, *Aristos*, signifies “*most excellent*,” which, in Sheffield, is thought to be, by no means, a property of the Aristocrats. Such then is the liberty I have taken with language, although, from the examples which both the ancient and modern histories give us of the fatal effect of cant-names, terms of distinction, &c. I must observe, that they are extremely inconsistent with Peace and Virtue. They have a tendency to promote strife and division. Mankind are already but too much divided about opinions, it is not necessary that idle names should add fuel to the flames of discord, and be the *warwhoop* to the opposing parties. The blood that was mutually shed by the *Greens* and the *Blues* in the decline of the Roman Empire, the money that has been spent, and the families which have been ruined, on account of the ridiculous names of *Whig* and *Tory*, are melancholy proofs of the feeble causes which too often irritate men one against another. It is unbecoming the dignity of Man to quarrel about names. *Things* should be the sole objects of his attention.

Aristocracy, would fulfil the necessary duties with equal exactness, and at a cheaper rate.* But, admitting that they performed in person, the duties for which they are paid, cannot the same functions be executed with equal care, at least, with equal *honesty*, by unprivileged Citizens, who are ambitious to serve their country, and, of whose ability, the public have previously received unequivocal testimonies?—Every Nation exists and prospers by private occupations and public functions. In the former class, is comprised every species of employment; from those professions which furnish conveniencies to our first wants, to those which are continued in a gradual ascending scale of refinement in trade, merchandise, and science. All of these are carried on by THE PEOPLE. In the latter class, are included those departments which belong to the administration of the public will. Who then ought to fill these offices? I answer, THE PEOPLE. An organ to express the general will, and a few officers selected by, and from the People, to execute that will, are all that can be wanted for the purposes of Government. But, if the Government itself becomes the patrimony of a *few*, the good of the *many* can never be comprehended in it, and it will swell beyond all bounds the places which it creates. The People being capable of performing (and always at a cheaper rate) every thing which is arduous in the public service, *without* the help of the privileged orders; it is clear, that *superior* places would be also infinitely better filled by

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* To illustrate this position by one striking example which happens to come uppermost in my mind. Suppose the Earl of Sandwich (*a peer of the realm, and whipper in to the King at the rate of L. 4000 a-year*) pay four inferior jockeys to himself, L. 50 a-year, for doing all that it is expected *he* should do, it is clear, that if *he*, who *does nothing* for his money, were sent about his business, and those, *who do all*, were retained, there would be a saving to the People of L. 3800 a-year; the compound interest of which, in fourteen years, Pitt may tell them.—And so on you may calculate of all the rest.

them, because they would be the lot and recompense of talents and acknowledged services. THE PEOPLE compose the *whole* body of the State; but with the cumbersome load of privileged orders, it forms a whole, shackled and oppressed. Abate the nuisance, it will be a compact body, free and flourishing.—Without the People, nothing can go on well; but without the *Lurdanes*,* who are a heavy rent charge on every nation, where they are to be found, every thing would prosper and contribute to equal liberty and general happiness. As, then, the Commons comprehend all that belongs to the nation, it follows, that all who are not of the Commons, do not belong to the nation. The Commons, therefore, are the Nation, *minus* the privileged orders, which is a confraternity that Heaven, in its wrath, has sent to plague and desolate the earth. If the above corollary be true, who will dare to say, that the People have not, within themselves, all that is needful to form a complete nation?—It is a strong and robust Man, whose feet are shackled, and whose arms are chained.

Another abominable practice, which follows from this polluted source, is that relic of feudal barbarism—the Law of *primogeniture*; which, in defiance of morals and justice, dissolves the tenderest connexions of life, by dooming, to poverty and dependence, every child but the first born, who, with the family title, is destined to figure in splendour and in magnificence.† The disinherited sons and daughters of Nobility, being quartered on the public, helpless and

* *Lurdane* is an old Saxon word, which was applied to the Danes. It meant an *idle lazy fellow*, who lived at other people's expence. When our Saxon fathers asserted their liberty, they put all the *Lurdanes* to death.

† In the Saxon times, land was divided *equally* among all the male children of the deceased, according to the custom of *Gavelkind*.

and destitute, the Government is compelled to assemble a standing army, and to invent a number of useless offices for their nourishment and support.—Hence, another cause of national expenditures, and, of course, of national taxes. By this increase of inequality of property, it is no difficult matter to habituate the People to an unnatural inequality of rights. It retards all agricultural improvements, and impedes the progress of general industry and cultivation; it discourages population, by inducing Men to lead a life of celibacy, and prevents individuals from cultivating their own estates, by collecting, into one hand, a vast mass of property. The effects of this system, are every where visible; the fabricated Noble banquets in a superb mansion, while the noble of nature, some village Hambden perhaps, starves in a land of plenty. In short, it makes idleness fashionable, and luxurious living the object of universal imitation. Pomp is substituted for comforts, and prostitution for marriage.*

In order to supply the deficiency of natural or acquired abilities, and to attract the gaze of the vulgar, titles of honor, and external badges of distinction, as well as a peculiar dress (gross impositions!) have been devised; and, under such hypocritical semblances,

* The civil regulations of all European countries are totally silent on the vices of the Aristocracy; their frequent defection from principles is never punished. In the year 1675, a motion was carried in the *House of Lords*, enjoining a test for every man to be taken, in favour of *passive obedience and nonresistance towards the King, and all that are in authority under him*. Their rule of action has no other fixed or common principle than what they please to make it. The *servile* candidate will feel himself *honoured*, when his poor constituent gets drunk with him at an election, but he is *ashamed* to be seen publicly with him in the metropolis; so the Tyrant of the Caribbees delights to *sleep* with his female slave, yet, would feel his honor wounded, and all his *feelings* shocked, should she sit down at table with him, or even *eat* in his presence. There is one consolation, however, for the People—which is, that if a *Great Man* keeps at a distance from us, we are sure that we keep at an equal distance from him at the same time.

semblances, there is not a place of any pecuniary profit, which they have neglected to seize upon.— If it were nothing more than a mere title which is conferred, we should know *what* is given, but when power is united to it, we can never form an estimate of the lengths to which dominion will be carried.— The influence of Nobility having been so great in the guidance of human affairs, it is natural here to ask, *What is their original?* The answer must strike a gloom over the philosophic mind, and make the tongue of the most venal advocate of Aristocracy falter when he utters it.—“ The chiefs of ferocious warriors, who united the barbarism of victory to that of manners, whose first titles were usurpation and plunder, and who founded their pre-eminence over their countrymen, upon the authority of command which they exercised in wars. Thus, the *fields of battle* were the nurseries of the Nobility — Hence issued that crowd of Dukes, Counts, and Marquises, by which Europe has been overrun and ravaged. All these titles of human vain-glory were at first military, and marked various degrees of rank in command; but these same titles soon became distinctions, and peculiar privileges in the civil order. Soon they established that feudal barbarity, which, during many ages, has debased human nature, converted whole nations into clans of slaves, and a few individuals into broods of tyrants.”* Such is the infamous origin of Nobility. In despite of which, there are not wanting men, whose glory is concentrated in the acquisition of a title, and whose lives are spent in the mean acts of corruption and intrigue, to be invested with the insignia of an order. The *end* perfectly corresponds with the *means* employed to attain it. To wear the paltry puerile baubles of state,

* Considerations sur l'ordre de Cincinnatus, par M. le Comte de Mirabeau.

state, they are proud to relinquish the glorious name of CITIZEN; to rally around the throne, and to be its base and corrupt agents. For nick-names, and for womanish play-things, they violate the laws of justice, by adopting the maxims of inequality; and, like the young Roman, who betrayed her country for rings and bracelets, they are ready to sell their's for a ribband, a star, or a title.*

Decorations and titles speak to the imagination, and, at length, gradually steal into the minds, and deprave the reason of Men. They positively transform the human species. "A peerage, in more modern ages, has been, in general, the wages of iniquity and corruption;† a distinction not to be purchased at a smaller price than everlasting infamy and disgrace."‡ Do titles recal to the admiration of posterity the exercise of civic virtues, the sacrifice of self to common good, the improvement of agriculture, the superiority of talents? No. They swell the fancy with the dazzling lustre of conquests, with the idea of innocent blood, tormented forth in the vile cause of ambition; of battles fought, cities sacked, and captives made; of Rachels weeping for their children; of Ramas ringing the sad sounds of lamentation.

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* Tit. Liv. i. c. 2.

Mr Hume observes, in his Appendix to the life of James I. that "the advantages which result from opulence are solid and real; that those who are possessed of them need not dread the near approaches of their inferiors. The distinctions of birth and title being more empty and imaginary, soon *vanish upon familiar access and acquaintance.*"

† Suffolk, the prime minister of James I. was to supply, from an exhausted treasury, the profusion of the King, and of Somerset, the King's young favourite and Ganymede. The title of *Baronet*, invented by Salisbury, was sold; and two thousand patents of that species of knighthood, were disposed of for so many thousand pounds. *Each rank of Nobility had also its price affixed to it.*—Hume, Appendix, vii. 4.—A pasquinade was, in this reign, affixed to St. Paul's, in which an art was promised to be taught, very necessary to assist frail memories in retaining the names of the new Nobility.—*Ibid.*

‡ Babler, No. 13.

lamentation and o mourning; of Kings deposed, and others wading to their vacant thrones through oceans of civic blood; of public Liberty destroyed; of Priests avenged!—Why should the truth be concealed from the People? The Aristocracy desire to be distinguished *from* you, not to be distinguished *by* you. In a Government, where such an antisocial system is prevalent, what is to be expected, but the extension of that corrupt influence by which it is upheld: the levelling and oppression of the lower orders, and the institution of Placemen, Pensioners, and every other kind of subordinate Despots, by whom the Liberty, the Justice, the Peace, and the Happiness of a Nation are stabbed?—Admitting, even for a moment, that the People could create an order of privileged Men, independent of their controul, it cannot justify their existence in perpetuity, since it would be injustice to delegate or transmit that to posterity, which might be too enlightened, too wise, or in circumstances too happy to require such an institution.—Such a plea would remove every principle, or even pretext, by which their necessity is justified.*

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* In the general observations which I have made on the privileged orders, I must request the reader to include, where it concerns them, the *ignorant country Gentlemen, or Landed Interest*, (as they are sometimes absurdly called) as well as the aristocracy of trade, and the members of all corporate bodies, who, as such, must necessarily imbibe the *esprit de corps*, so common among all separate communities of men. The observations of Dean Swift, who was himself an Aristocrat and a Courtier, on the privileged orders, deserve the serious attention of every man. They are to be found in *Guilliver's Voyage to Laputa*—"Having strictly examined (says he) all the persons of greatest name in the Courts of Princes for an hundred years back, I found how the world had been misled by prostitute writers, to ascribe the greatest exploits in war to *cowards*; the wisest council to *fools*; sincerity to *flatterers*; Roman Virtue to *betrayers of their country*; Truth to *informers*. How many innocent and excellent persons had been condemned to death, or *bannishment* by the practising of great Ministers upon the *corruption of Judges*, and the malice of factions: How many *villains* had been exalted to the greatest places of trust, power, dignity, and

No man ought to rise above the rest of his fellow-creatures, without giving them some equivalent for such a superiority: Nor should public distinction ever be conferred but on public merit. It is *wise* to employ

and profit: How great a share in the motions and events of Courts, Councils, and Senates, might be challenged by *barods, whores, pimps, parasites, and buffoons*: How low an opinion I had of human wisdom and integrity, when I was truly informed of the springs and motives of great enterprises and Revolutions in the world, and of the contemptible accidents to which they owed their success. Three Kings protested to me, that in their whole reigns they did never once prefer any person of merit, unless by mistake or treachery of some minister in whom they confided; neither would they do it if they were to live again: And they shewed with great strength of reason, that the royal throne could not be supported *without Corruption*; because, that positive, confident, restive temper, which Virtue infused into Min, was a perpetual clog to public business. I had the curiosity to enquire, in a particular manner, by what methods great numbers had procured to themselves *high titles of honor, and prodigious estates*; and I confined my enquiry to a very *modern period*: I discovered such a *scene of infamy*, that I cannot reflect upon it without some seriousness. *Perjury, oppression, subornation, fraud, pandarism, and the like infirmities*, were amongst the most excusable acts they had to mention; and, for these, I gave, as it was reasonable, great allowance. But, when some confessed they owed their greatness and wealth to *Sodomy or Intest*; others to the *prostituting of their own wives and daughters*; others to the *betraying their country*; some to *poisoning*; more to the *perverting of justice, in order to destroy the innocent*—I hope I may be pardoned if these discoveries inclined me a little to abate of that *profund veneration* which I am naturally apt to pay to persons of *high rank*, who ought to be treated with the utmost respect due to their *sublime dignity, by us their inferiors*. I had often read of some great services done to States, and desired to see the persons by whom those services were performed. Upon enquiry, I was told, that their names were to be found on no record, except a few of them, whom history hath represented as *the vilest rogues and traitors*. As to the rest, I had never once heard of them. They all appeared with *dejected looks, and in the meanest habit*, most of them telling me, they died in *poverty and disgrace, and the rest on a scaffold or a gibbet*. I descended so low as to desire, that some *English women* of the old stamp, might be summoned to appear, once so famous for the simplicity of their manners, diet, and dress; for justice in their dealings; for their true spirit of liberty, for their valour and love of their country. Neither could I be wholly unmoved, after comparing the *living* with the *dead*, when I considered how all these pure native virtues were prostituted for a piece of money by their grandchildren, who, in *selling their votes, and managing at elections*, have acquired every vice and corruption that can possibly be learned in a Court."

employ men marked for their virtue and capacity ; it is *just* to reward them. This was the *original* of the Conscript Fathers of antient Rome, who long enjoyed popular estimation, because they had with it the confidence of the people. But, the example of that great empire should be a serious lesson to modern reformers. It is natural for power to encroach ; and men in authority are more apt to depart from moderation, than the people from subjection. Power begets property, and property begets power.* The people being the materials of government, their protection is its end ; nor ought it to have any other : And that government, wherein they have no share, or in which they are of no consideration, is an unnatural MONSTER—it is a head unconcerned for the body and members, and constantly devouring, instead of nourishing them. When a man considers himself only for himself, and pursues his own advantage to the hurt of others, his elevation is preposterous ; it is against justice and nature ; *and better he descend, than all men sink*. Nature produces no nobility ; nor do the greatest, when they come into the world, surpass the meanest man in features, complexion, or strength.† The difference is created by civil establishment :

* The Roman Senators engrossed the wealth of the State. The People were poor, and kept so by the Nobility, who oppressed them by usury, seized their persons, and kept them in bonds. The violence was too great, the usage too ignominious to be always borne by a free and bold people. They roused from their state of thralldom, and forced the nobility to allow them magistrates of *their own*. Thus the tribunitial office was instituted, which soon taught the people to *aspire in their turn*, and to assert their right to the *biggest honors in the State*. This was the effect and punishment of Patrician pride. The people were *content* to be governed ; but when their governors insulted and oppressed them, they *assumed the Government themselves*.

† On the contrary, the nobility are remarkable for being the sprouts of effeminacy and debauchery ; they are generally, till thirty years of age, white headed boys, very fair, of a sickly complexion, and full of scrophula and disease (*especially the King's evil*;) and, after that period, full of gout complaints, &c.

blishment: But it cannot convey a great soul with a great name, any more than stature or strength.— Nobility, without virtue, is but exalted infamy;— and as the noble is one of the people, *only in masquerade*, he should be liable to the same punishment as the ploughman. What a contrast is there, between the modern nobility of Europe, and the tribunes of antient Rome? Meanness and corruption dishonor the one, but the latter honored the great station they were placed in more than the great station could honor them. Greatness of soul is above the gift of man; it cannot be conveyed, but it may be distinguished. Of little value is that reverence which is paid only to title and rank; nor will any wise man regard that respect which would be paid to his footman, were his footman in the same station. True esteem is always personal. What is paid to fortune and accidents, is only flattery or fashion, for the heart has no share in it.

The noble, who is unfit for his situation, is an intruder—a mimic, who, indeed, acts a part, but sustains no real dignity. Nor can the ornaments and prerogatives of his order, serve for aught, but to expose him to constant ridicule and contempt; like many of the nobility in the time of Sallust, who says of them, “*That they were like so many statues, and, besides their pompous names, had nothing to recommend them.*” By provoking, and unceasingly insulting the people, the Roman nobility became slaves. The same happened in Denmark in the middle of the last century. All public burdens and taxes were laid on the people, because the nobility refused to bear any part of them. The injured people took bitter vengeance. They made the king absolute, in order to make the nobility slaves. The first great blow that was given to the antient liberties of France, was given by the nobles, who consented, in the reign of Charles VII. that the court should raise money

money upon their tenants, for the venal consideration of sharing that money among themselves. On this subject I cannot forbear quoting a passage from that good Frenchman, and honest historian, Philippe de Comines:—"Is there (sa's he) a prince upon earth, who has power to lay a single penny upon his subjects, without the grant and consent of those who are to pay it, otherwise than by tyranny and violence?—No prince can levy it, unless through tyranny, and under the penalty of excommunication. But there are those who are brutish enough not to know what they can do or omit in this affair."—What the nobility did, others were prompt to imitate, and the court took advantage of the general venality. Mezerai had too much cause to say, of the States General, convened in the beginning of the reign of Charles VIII. that the president of the States, many of the ecclesiastics, and several deputies, sold themselves to the court, and betrayed the public cause. What the court got by these means, was but a poor acquisition—not the hearts of the people, but the venal mouths of the deputies. It is at best but the strength of a man in a phrenzy and in convulsions, mighty for a time, and supernatural, but ending in miserable faintness, languor, and death.

Ridiculous is a noble name, without noble qualities. Is a fruit-tree to be regarded which bears no fruit?—The reasoning of Marius is unanswerable.* The illustrious virtue of the founder of a family is but perpetual reproach upon his descendants, if they want virtue. The merit of our forefathers derives none upon us, no more than their crimes do guilt. Is it any praise to a coward, that he had an ancestor who was brave? The less merit they possess, the more is their pride; and nothing is more common than to find, in very worthless, in very corrupt men, notable stateliness, and unbounded insolence.

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* Quanto vita illerum præclarior, tanto horum socordia flagitiosior.

It was part of the cenforial office, in antient Rome, to *weed* the Senate, and to degrade unworthy fenators. Useful work! which it were well to follow in modern times. It was not thought either honorable or fafe, that men of bad character, and fpendthrifts fhould act and vote amongst magiftrates and law-givers; or that a man of bad morals fhould direct the public manners, and difpofe of human happinefs and property. A fenator was at firft no more than a plebeian, well accomplifhed; and it was but reasonable, that fenators, who wanted accomplifhments, fhould be declared plebeians again, when, in effect, they were fo before. Nobility was the price of worth, and, without it, it was reckoned ufurpation. It was thought equitable ufage to raife up men of merit, as well as to *pull them down*, when they fhould happen to be raifed without it. Great qualities were accounted natural nobility, fuch as no favour, no power could beftow; and the power which exalted worthlefs men, was thought rather to debase itfelf, than to honor them. As it was thought juft to reward abilities, fo was it deemed a robbery of the public to take a reward without deferving it.—Oh! if fome countries had public cenfors, as spirited as the Romans, how many Senates, which are now filled with infamous villains, would be thinned and *weeded*! How many nations would thereby be reftored to happinefs, liberty, and peace!

FRIENDS AND COUNTRYMEN,

According to the old fyftem, ignorance, idlenefs, and vice, are no difqualifications for a legiflator.—Not a fingle virtue is required in the exercife of any public function; men are not ennobled for their patriotifm; priefts are not advanced for their piety and learning; generals for their conduct or valour; judges for their integrity; or fenators for their love of mankind. The laws are obfcure, and their interpretation

pretation is left to those whose interest lies in perverting and eluding them ; nor is there an outline of one good institution that is not blurred and blotted by corruptions. But, the empire of reason extends itself daily, and, in its progress, occasions more and more the restoration of usurped rights. The lamp of science is blazing, and kindles, in the bosom of the most unlettered peasant, a thirst for knowledge, and a love of virtue and liberty. Very soon all men must be enclosed within the fence of the social contract, which *equally* respects and binds all associated beings one towards another. It will gather together numberless advantages for suffering man. During the long night of feudal barbarism and idolatry, the true relations between men have been destroyed ; all good notions turned topsyturvy—all justice poisoned to its source : But, at the dawn of day, these gothic absurdities, with those who profit by them, will vanish “ like the baseless fabric of a vision,” and the remnants of antient servitude fall and be annihilated. This is morally and physically true. It merits alike the serious contemplation of rulers, and the more awful reflection of the people. It may happen to avert a storm of national vengeance, which has long been brewing ; and, it will prove to the world, that the governors of nations *can* be humane, when their fears of an irritated people give them reason to tremble. They will have to chuse (because they are the guardians of it) whether this aged and monstrous colossal pile of feudality, shall be peacefully taken to pieces by the skilful hand of the reforming workman, or tumbled into an heap of ruins by the wild and naked fury of the people. They will have to decide, whether the sun of despotism shall go down into the calm waters of oblivion, or set in blood and horror. Kings, Avoyers, Nobles, Syndics, High and Mighty Lords, Most Puissant, Most Excellent Senators ! do not reject, with scorn, the remonstrances

remonstrances of the People, over whom you reign ! Remember, for your own sakes, that when injured Man lifts up his arm to Heaven he discovers his origin, and finds himself a joint sovereign of the world ! Remember that his arm is his sceptre, and that when the PEOPLE roar, their sacred voice is thunder—when they lift their mighty arm, it is death to tyrants !—Common happiness and security are the ends of society. Where these ends are not pursued, but, in opposition to them, power degenerates into violence, and subjection into slavery ; where mere will and passion bear rule—where universal misery and dread, and open oppression prevail, can government be said to exist ? No—No. This is not the exercise of government, but of HOSTILITY ; and, **TO RESIST AN ENEMY, IS BUT SELF-DEFENCE—IT IS THE LAW AND DUTY OF NATURE.** Is it not repugnant to nature, and to all common sense, to reverence injustice and tyranny, to be fond of their authors, and to conceive that any duty is due to them ? Was it possible for the Romans to love Tiberius—to esteem Caligula or Nero ?—It is enough that people love such as love them—that they esteem those who protect and relieve them. It is their duty, too, to terrify delinquency, and punish crimes.

From the objections which have been raised against the system of privilege, is derived by a necessary consequence, the system of **EQUALITY.** The advantages that are derived from Equality of Rights, will appear more evident when placed in opposition to Despotism, which is inequality ; and which, by palsying the genius, and damping the courage of men, causes an universal lethargy in a whole nation. Those who either are under the influence of Tyranny, or who are menaced with its speedy approach, should prepare their minds for so dismal an annihilation of themselves ; they should learn the degree of wretchedness which attends it ; and should read the series of misery by which every nation is pursued,

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that groans beneath the rod of oppression. According to this system, men are divided into two classes, in consequence of the elevation of that monstrous Colossus, which they can never look at without fear and trembling. One class is removed from the scene of selfishness and corruption, and keeps at a distance merely on motives of fear; the other approaches this object from motives of ambition, and, of course, flatters itself with security from the consciousness of its meanness. It forms, between the despot and the rest of the nation, an order of subordinate tyrants, not less suspicious and more cruel than their master. The military are insolent; the priest completes the slavishness and degeneracy of the people, by his examples and his discourses. Such a government awaits only for the signal to do whatever it pleases. The great Noble cringes and fawns in the king's presence, and the people do the like before the great nobleman. The natural dignity of man is eclipsed, because he has no ideas of his rights. Around the "*great red dragon*," his agents, his favourites, the people are crushed under foot, with the same inadvertence that we crush the insects which swarm amongst the dust of our fields. Public morals are corrupted. Grinding vexations, and the most unexampled outrages, lose their characteristic atrocity, and no longer draw down on them horror and contempt. He who *dares* to name virtue, patriotism, and equity, is considered as a *violent man*; an expression, which implies, "*an abject indulgence of crimes, by which we profit*." The body of the nation must be dissolute and superstitious; for despotism cannot be established without the interference of superstition, nor be maintained without its support; and servitude always leads on to debauchery, as a substitute for reason and consequence. Men of information pay their court to the great, and profess the religion of policy. Tyranny leading, in its train, a multitude of spies and informers, the least indiscretion assumes the hue of sedition. Men think little, say nothing, and are afraid of reason-

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ing; they are even alarmed at their own ideas. The philosopher keeps his thoughts to himself, as the rich man conceals his treasure. The man, who leads the happiest life, is the most unknown. Mistrust and terror form the basis of the general manners. The citizens live separate from each other, and the whole nation becomes melancholy, pusillanimous, stupid, and silent.

Such is the scale of misfortune and degradation to which Despotism or Inequality would reduce the human race. But observe the celestial walk of sweet EQUALITY. It is of heavenly origin, very little known to the world, represented, by despots to the ignorant, as an abomination; but, when once seen, the eye of humanity delights to gaze in raptures on it. It is an enemy to every useless order in the state; it is the gift of nature, the inalienable and essential right of man; of which he cannot deprive himself, much less his posterity, by any contract. It makes the people the only basis of legitimate power; and as no authority can be exercised over them, that does not emanate from them, every public officer, whether executive, judicial, or legislative, is their mandatory, substitute, agent, and servant. He is, therefore, accountable to them at all times. The end of every government is to assure the existence of the body politic, and to procure, to the individuals who compose it, the power of enjoying securely and quietly their natural rights.

Such a government is established for the common advantage, and not for the profit or particular interest of a *single man*, or of *an assembly of men*. Every political association is formed by individuals voluntarily bound one to another; then by a social contract, wherein the *whole people* or *society* binds itself to *each citizen*, and *each citizen* to the whole people or *society*, that all shall be governed by certain laws, of a *fixed nature*, and for the common good; that *every one of the people* has a right to participate in the legislation, without which there is no liberty, and no free government; and, lastly, that every people have a right to

change their government, when these objects are not fulfilled—the doctrine of non-resistance against arbitrary power and oppression, being absurd, servile, and destructive of the good and happiness of the human race. Such being the only foundations of governments, not acting by usurpation, it is obvious, that every man, to preserve his independence, should exercise some profession, by which he may live honestly, without burdening the nation. The idea of a man being born a legislator, a judge, or magistrate, is an insult upon the human understanding. It is quite silly.

CITIZENS, the first right of human nature is LIBERTY; the second, EQUALITY, without which, Liberty cannot be respected; the third is PROPERTY, the legitimate fruit of an *equal* use of Liberty. The system of privilege, by destroying the second, annihilates the first, and endangers the security of the latter. Fatal events, and bad laws, have conspired against the people; they have been disinherited, stripped, deprived of every thing. “With an hundred thousand arms (says Montesquieu) they have overthrown every thing, with an hundred thousand feet they have crawled like insects.”

Secured by the awful sanctions of Virtue, the temple of Equality stands unshaken: The storms of faction may beat against it, and the tempests of tyranny howl around it; but it is seated on a rock, and on its altars the whole human race will shortly sacrifice. Despots, too, have thundered from all sides against it; like an aged forest torn by storms, they roar vengeance, but they *must* fall. If I may use a metaphor, Astræa, who had been gone up to heaven for so long a time, is now come down upon earth again, and the reign of Innocence and Concord is going to be revived among mankind. Hitherto we have examined the world only as a vast scene of depopulation and waste, it is time to contemplate the dawns of reason, happiness, and humanity, rising from among the ruins of a world which still reeks with the blood of all its people, civilized as well as savage.

